

The Kaagbhusund Ramayan Or The Aadi Ramayan

(Based on 'Ram Charit Manas' of Goswami Tulsidas)

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes]

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

“He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!” [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

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PREFACE

The “KAAG-BHUSUND RAMAYAN” (pronounced as “kāg-bhusunda rāmāyaṇa”) is a part of the epic story of Lord Ram as narrated in the famed book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ by Goswami Tulsidas. This ‘Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan’ appears in the Uttar Kand (i.e. Chapter/Canto 7) of Ram Charit Manas.

An attractive and characteristic feature of the English rendering of this wonderful and fascinating story is that it contains the original Text that is accompanied by verse-to-verse Roman Transliteration, followed by a detailed exposition in a simple and lucid language, aided by notes that further elaborate on the subject matter and explain it.

The story is rich in spiritual content, and it stresses on the value and importance of the glorious virtue of devotion and affection for Lord God and the need to surrender oneself to Him as a means of attaining fulfilment in life as well as to have a sense of abiding peace, bliss and beatitude.

The ‘Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan’ is also known as the “Aadi Ramayan” (ādi-rāmāyaṇa) because it is the most ancient and the first narrative of the sacred and divine story that describes the life and time of Lord Ram, a manifestation of the Supreme Being in the form of a human being on earth, and the deeds done by the Lord during his sojourn on earth.

It is ‘the most ancient and the first such narration’ of the story of Lord Ram because it was first conceived by Lord Shiva, the wisest, the most enlightened and self-realised Lord God amongst all the Gods, in his Mana (mind and heart) during meditation as he was contemplating on the divine form of Lord Ram, his revered deity¹. When the appropriate time came he had revealed it to his consort Uma or Parvati when she showed her eagerness to hear it, and then to the saintly crow named Kaag-Bhusund². Hence, these two were the first hearers of this story.

In due course of time the sacred story of Lord Ram was narrated by the saintly crow Kaag-Bhusund to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu³. Hence, this Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan—the ‘Aadi Ramayan’—is the first ever narration of the holy story of Lord Ram by any Jiva, a living being, to another Jiva—i.e. Kaag-Bhusund to Garud respectively.

Lord Shiva would have kept the story to himself because it is so profound and mystical in its nature that if it is revealed to a wrong person who has no faith in Lord Ram, it is more likely to cause grievous damage by way of skepticism, absurd interpretations and irrational logics to demean the divinity and holiness of the Lord

than serve any worthwhile spiritual purpose⁴. In both the cases of Parvati and Garud we find that Lord Shiva has revealed this story to them because he found that they were eager to hear it⁵.

The above reason is the primary cause why Shiva had revealed this story in the beginning, thereby making it the “*ādi-rāmāyaṇa*”, i.e. the first version of the divine story of Lord Ram.

Another important reason why the story of the Ramayan as narrated by the crow-saint Kaagbhusund is called ‘Aadi Ramayan’ is this: The most primary form of speech is the sound that is made in the throat, the sound of the vowel. As the world evolved and developed, a necessity was felt for more clarity in expression, and vowels proved insufficient to handle the increased demand. So was sowed the seed for development of the spoken word which underwent refinement over time to present us with the form of the spoken word which we know as a modern language. To fulfil the requirement of better modes of expression and understanding for which the vowels proved totally insufficient, the consonants were developed, and they served to compliment the vowels to form the modern language.

Hence, the Aadi language was the one that had no articulate words and primarily consisted of sounds made in the throat. When a crow crows, he merely makes a sound using the vocal cords. Though we humans may not understand what a crow says, but others of his like can easily understand what is being said. So therefore, when the wisest of the birds, i.e. the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund, repeated the story of the Ramayan that he had heard from Lord Shiva in a very primitive language, it surely is the most ancient and the first version of this holy story of Ramayan that is being recited or sung or narrated ever.

Hence, the story of the Ramayan as told by Kaagbhusund is aptly called the “Aadi Ramayan”, i.e. the most ancient version of the story of Lord Ram that was preached to a disciple by a learned teacher.

Subsequently however, as time passed, others too wished to hear it and benefit from its spiritual wisdom and nectar. Others heard it and so it was transmitted from one generation of sages, seers and saints to another by the oral method of transmission, viz. by hearing and narrating. The first amongst them were sages Yagyavalkya and Bharadwaj. While sage Yagyavalkya had heard it from Kaag-Bhusund directly, Bharadwaj had heard it from Yagyavalkya⁶.

Kaag-Bhusund or Kaagbhusund was a blessed and fortunate soul though his body was that of a crow as he had been directly blessed by Lord Ram who granted him an eternal life that would be steeped in wisdom and devotion, a life which would be free from all the taints of worldly delusions⁷. Rarely had the Lord blessed anyone with this boon. Even Lord Shiva had not only praised the spiritual stature and wisdom of this saintly crow⁸ but had himself heard him narrate the story of Lord Ram when he went in disguise and mingled with the audience to hear it incognito⁹.

Amongst the many listeners of this story from Kaag-Bhusund was Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu. Garud had become confused about the reality of Lord Ram and was so extremely perturbed in his mind and heart that he could not rest¹⁰. So he went to Narad who advised him to go to the creator Brahma, who in turn directed him to Lord Shiva, and Shiva finally told him to go to Kaag-Bhusund’s hermitage to hear the sacred and divine story of Lord Ram in order to overcome his delusions and accompanying bewilderments and restlessness¹¹.

The story of “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” was narrated by Lord Shiva to his consort Parvati when she had expressed surprise as to how it was ever possible that a humble

bird such as a crow could be so erudite and enlightened that even her husband, Lord Shiva, would be so thrilled when he heard the divine story of Lord Ram being narrated by the former, and if indeed the crow was so highly spiritually exalted as Shiva says he was then why was he a 'crow' in the first place, because a crow is deemed to be of a very low birth in the hierarchy of creation; he should have been of a higher birth instead of being a crow if he was so enlightened and spiritually exalted¹².

Lord Shiva grabbed this opportunity to preach many important principles of metaphysics and spirituality while narrating the Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan for the benefit of Parvati. He wished to tell her that the real good from hearing the divine story of Lord Ram's life and deeds in this world comes when one understands the import of the subtle and sublime spiritual message that it contains, when one imbibes its teachings and inculcates auspicious and noble values that it stands for in one's own life so as to improve one's own self both in terms of happiness in his temporal life in this world as well as for attaining spiritual bliss and salvation in the life hereafter. And therefore, merely hearing it as a re-telling of some ancient saga pertaining to some noble prince would be a fruitless exercise and time wasted.

This story titled "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" is an integral part of the epic Book known as 'Ram Charit Manas'. It was penned by one of the greatest, most respected and well-known poet saints of 16th century India called Goswami Tulsidas {birth: Hindu year Samvat 1589, corresponding to 1532 a.d; death: Sraavan Shukla Saptami of Samvat 1680, corresponding to 1623 a.d.}. Therefore, the present Book "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" is as outstanding, important and spiritually significant as the epic Book 'Ram Charit Manas' itself. The title "Ram Charit Manas" literally means the divine story of Lord Ram that describes the life, time and acts of the Lord as they are revealed in the heart of the Lord's devotee, where the heart is compared to a lake in which is filled the nectar of devotion, reverence and love for the Lord. The spiritual value of this Book has been elaborately highlighted in the preamble as well as the epilogue of Ram Charit Manas itself¹³.

Goswami Tulsidas, who is the author of the principal epic 'Ram Charit Manas' of which Kaagbhusund Ramayan is an integral part, was a very wise and clever saint. He had narrated the story related to the times and deeds of Lord Ram, but he had his doubts whether those who would read it will actually understand its hidden meaning. His doubts were justified—because the life and behaviour of Lord Ram was like any other noble prince, and one would be inclined to treat him as an ordinary human. Even Lord Shiva's consort Sati got confused about who Lord Ram actually was when she saw him wandering in the forest, and so was Garud who also got perplexed inspite of the fact that he is very close to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of creation, by virtue of him being Vishnu's mount, and the fact that Lord Ram was an incarnation of Vishnu. This being the case, there would be no wonder if ordinary humans would get deluded and confused about the real identity of Lord Ram. So, it was imperative that this confusion is removed.

Besides this, it was important that the hearer of the divine story of Ramayan should spiritually benefit from it. So Tulsidas incorporated the Kaagbhusund Ramayan as narrated by Lord Shiva in the main text of his epic 'Ram Charit Manas' with the intention that essential principles of metaphysics and spirituality could be taught in a simple language to all those who read about the life and times of Lord Ram so as to benefit them in every way.

This erudite saint also knew the doubting mentality of the world and the skeptic nature of the people who would read his Ramayan in the future: that they would be highly cynical of him and charge him of being biased in favour of his

chosen deity Lord Ram by raising Ram to a high pedestal of divinity that the latter perhaps does not deserve by twisting or tweaking the story to suit his purpose.

So Tulsidas played his cards carefully, and with prudence, by clearly asserting that he is merely re-telling the story of Lord Ram that has been already told by ancient sages and seers from time immemorial, and that he is not doing it to prove his scholarship or poetic skills but only to find peace for his soul as well as to purify his mind and speech. This establishes his objectivity in the narration¹⁴.

Therefore, instead of telling the story of Ramayan directly in the first-person-narrative style, he has clearly said that he is narrating what sage Yagyawalkya had said to sage Bharadwaj, what Lord Shiva said to Parvati, and other exalted sages such as Valmiki and Veda Vyas¹⁵.

But of course Tulsidas has interspersed his own narration with nuggets of advice and wisdom based on his own experiences and understanding of the ancient scriptures, which add immense shine and depth to the narration of Ram Charit Manas, making it similar to the Upanishads and the Purans because it has the characteristics of both. While on the one hand it resembles the “Purans” as it narrates a divine ‘story of the Lord God in one of his incarnations as Lord Ram’, and on the other hand it resembles the “Upanishads” because it contains a huge treasure of spiritual and metaphysical knowledge for which the Upanishads are so famed.

Tulsidas has summed up the spiritual benefits of his efforts by saying that “if there is a big river and a good king builds a bridge across it, then it enables even a humble ant to cross this river with ease”¹⁶.

The “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” only briefly describes the story of the worldly life, time and deeds of Lord Ram¹⁷.

Its main thrust and focus however, as pointed out in the foregoing discussion, is on explaining the hidden spiritual message in this divine story, and how it would benefit the ordinary creature, and herein lies the great importance of this unique version of the story of “Ramayan”. It teaches us how one would attain bliss and peace, how he would be able to get liberation and deliverance from the tangle of miseries and torments in which he finds himself in this mundane world of delusions, and how the creature’s soul can find emancipation and salvation for its own self even while remaining engaged in the duties assigned to him in this mundane world. Various aspects of metaphysics and spirituality are thoroughly explained by Kaagbhusund in a simple language and practical way that is shorn of high-flying terminology of the scriptures. This helps the profound spiritual message of the story of the “Ramayana” come within reach of even the humblest of creatures, thereby benefiting humanity at large like no other preaching and exposition on the scriptures has ever done and achieved success before.

The other salient features of the “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” are, inter-alia, the following:--

(a) It was narrated by Lord Shiva himself to Parvati, his consort, and therefore it acquires great spiritual value, authenticity and holiness, and finds a place which is at par with the rest of the text of holy book known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of which it is a part.

(b) This Ramayan is intended to bring out and highlight the spiritual benefits that one gets by hearing, reading, studying and narrating the divine story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being in a human form. It tells us the essential message of the divine story of Lord Ram’s life and deeds, and how we could benefit from it, both in terms of our spiritual welfare as well as for a fruitful and peaceful life in this world¹⁸.

(c) It points out the different obstacles and shortcomings of character that one encounters in one's endeavour to become perfect and good, thereby helping a conscientious individual to strive to improve himself and attain a higher state of being¹⁹.

(d) It describes the cosmic form of Lord Ram as the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing form of the Supreme Being²⁰, and explains the greatness of Lord Ram to prove the fact that Ram was not an ordinary prince of some ancient kingdom of Ayodhya²¹.

(e) It elucidates elaborately on the concepts of Bhakti (devotion), Maya (delusions), Gyan (true spiritual knowledge and enlightenment), Moha (worldly attractions and attachments) etc.²²; the characteristics of saints and non-saints²³; the unique features of Kali-yug, the present era which is deemed to be the most degrading of the four-era cycle of creation, its comparison with the other eras, and its one special goodness²⁴; and so on and so forth.

(f) During the course of discussions, the saintly-crow Kaagbhusund has answered seven great questions of Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu to whom this Ramayan was narrated by Kaagbhusund) that have a direct bearing on the creatures spiritual welfare²⁵.

(g) It is in the style of many of the major Upanishads wherein a disciple asks certain metaphysical questions from his Guru or teacher, and the latter explains the relevant philosophy by way of an answer given in such details that all doubts in the mind of the disciple are removed. Here the disciple is Garud, the cosmic mount of Lord Vishnu, and the Guru is Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow who was fortunate to have been blessed by Lord Ram himself. The conversation removed all spiritual doubts in the mind of Garud.

Thus we observe that the essential spiritual message of the divine story of Lord Ram and how it would benefit the ordinary creature is the main purpose and thrust of Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan.

This said, now let us see who the protagonist of this Ramayan, sage Kaagbhusund, was. He was a crow by his physical body, but his 'true self', his Atma, his soul, was highly enlightened and spiritually elevated. By the divine grace of Lord Ram, no worldly misery, torment and taint ever affected him²⁶. He had attained immortality²⁷. He was exemplarily self-realised, wise, well-versed in the principles of spirituality and metaphysics, and a great saint who was praised even by Lord Shiva so much so that the latter derived immense peace when he heard the narration of the nectar-like story of Lord Ram being narrated by Kaagbhusund at his hermitage²⁸.

Kaagbhusund has described about his previous births himself when Garud wished to know about it. In his earlier life he was born as a Sudra (a low caste), then as a serpent due to a curse, then as a Brahmin, and finally as a crow in his present birth²⁹. He then goes on to explain why he loves this body of a crow though conventionally a crow is regarded with contempt and is despised by all as a lowly form of existence even amongst the species of creatures known as the 'bird'³⁰.

Kaagbhusund was an expert in the knowledge of the divine story of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being in a human form, whose life, times and deeds are narrated by many bards and savants down the ages in numerous versions that are universally known by the name of "Ramayana". He had acquired this knowledge naturally, without any effort due to the grace of Lord Ram upon him. All his wishes were automatically fulfilled. He was well-versed in all aspects of the philosophy of

devotion and spirituality that helps a creature attain liberation and deliverance from this mortal gross world³¹.

Lord Shiva was so impressed by Kaagbhusund's depth of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment that when Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, had once become deluded and needed advice to remove his doubts about the divinity of Lord Ram, and had approached Shiva to preach him and tell him the truth, the Lord thought it fit to send him to Kaag-Bhusund³².

What greater certificate is needed to prove Kaagbhusund's highly exalted stature in the field of devotion and spirituality, as well as the level of his wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment when even the greatest of all the Gods, Lord Shiva, had himself found peace when he had heard the in-depth narration of the divine story of Lord Ram as narrated by Kaag-Bhusund, and had consequentially referred Garud to him to hear this discourse.

Kaagbhusund had attained immortality and an exalted spiritual stature by his self-realisation and devotion for Lord Ram, the Supreme Being. This fact has been endorsed by Lord Shiva who himself is the most enlightened and the wisest of all the Gods³³, and acknowledged by Kaagbhusund himself³⁴.

This book contains the entire text of the "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" as it is incorporated in 'Ram Charit Manas', along with its English Transliteration, verse-by-verse, which is followed by an elaborate English version prepared by me (Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia) that renders this wonderful spiritual text readable and accessible for the whole humanity which may have missed this nectar-like Ramayan because of the language barrier, as the original text is in a vernacular language known as Avadhi, a variation of Hindi, the national language of India, in which it is originally written by Goswami Tulsidas. The English Transliteration and English narration will surely make this classic "Ramayan" approachable and loved by the entire English-knowing world.

I must express my thanks and gratitude to Sri Somil Bharti of Vrindavan who has done a great service to Lord Ram and to humanity at large by doing the English transliteration of the original text of the book for me, thereby making it most valuable for all, especially those who are not able to read the Hindi text but depend upon the English transliteration for reciting the verses.

Finally, I have no words to express my feeling of immense fulfillment at having been instrumental in successfully carrying out the divine mandate of the Lord God by writing a detailed English version of this Ramayan so that it becomes accessible to the human race. It is done with a spirit of service of the Lord God, and therefore no credit is deserved by me. I am not a scholar, nor erudite and wise at all. I just sat down to write, never planning what to and what not to write. The words were typed on the computer as they were dictated by the hidden Holy Spirit. Therefore, I don't deserve any credit whatsoever. However, being a human being after all, with an ordinary gross body made up of flesh and blood, I am as prone to commit errors as all others, and so if there are errors or shortcomings in this rendering of the Ramayan, I sincerely beg forgiveness³⁵.

The reader must understand that this story of 'Kaagbhusund Ramayan' is not a novel, but it is like spiritual nectar for the soul, and no matter who provides this nectar, or in whichever pot it is provided, once imbibed (i.e. this story is read and its message understood) it is bound to inject rejuvenation for the spirit, it is certain to give peace and solace for the individual's inner-self, and it would invariably help the

diligent reader to find a way for his spiritual and temporal well-being. I hope my endeavour will benefit humanity at large.

With this, I offer this ‘flower of my efforts’ to my beloved and dearest Lord, Sri Ram, who I must confess is the soul and essence of my entire being, and the only One who I love and adore. It is for Him that I have written this Holy Book. I therefore have confidence that He will accept it with a benevolent smile!

Amen.

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{References: ¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9, 11-12 that precede Doha no. 35.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 30.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 68.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 39; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 128 with respect to Shiva revealing this divine story of Lord Ram to Parvati or Uma because she wanted to hear it affectionately; and (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30 with respect to Shiva revealing it to crow-saint Kaag-Bhusund because he found that the latter was eligible to hear it as he had profound devotion for Lord Ram in his heart and mind.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 30.

⁷Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 88.

⁸Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 62.

⁹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 55; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 57.

¹⁰Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 68 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 59.

¹¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 59—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62.

¹²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 55.

¹³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 43; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130.

¹⁴Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 13; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (iv) Doha no. 35 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 11-13.

¹⁵Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3; (i) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 30; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14.

¹⁶Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 13.

¹⁷Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 68.

¹⁸Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 55; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 61; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 64; (iv) Doha no. 68 ka; (v) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 64; (vi) Doha no. 72 ka; (vii) Doha no. 122 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7, 12-19; (viii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 123—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 125.

¹⁹Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71.

²⁰Viraat Purush: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 82.

²¹The greatness of Lord Ram: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92.

²²Bhakti, Maya, Gyan: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precedes Doha no. 59; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 71; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79; (vi) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 85; (vii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 86—to Doha no. 87; (viii) Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 120.

²³Saint and non-saint: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 120—to Chaupai line no. 27 that precedes Doha no. 121; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 125.

²⁴The Kali-Yug, its benefits inspite of all its shortcomings, and its comparison with the other three eras of the 4-era one cycle of creation: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Doha no. 103.

²⁵The seven questions: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 122.

²⁶Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 85 ka; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 94; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 114.

²⁷Kaagbhusund was immortal like all self-realised souls: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 94; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 96.

²⁸Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 57 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-10; (ii) Doha no. 63 kha.

²⁹Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand: (a) Sudra—Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 97; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 109; (b) Serpent—Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 107; and Doha no. 109 kha along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 6; (c) Brahmin—Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 110; and finally (d) a Crow—Doha no. 112 ka.

³⁰Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 95—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 96.

³¹Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 62; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 114.

³²Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 60—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 62.

³³Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 94.

³⁴Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 96.

³⁵Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 14.}

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The Kaagbhusund Ramayan Or The Aadi Ramayan

(Based on 'Ram Charit Manas' of Goswami Tulsidas)

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes]

The Genesis, Authority & Nomenclature of The Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan

(A) The Genesis of the Story of the Ramayan:

The sacred and divine story of Lord Ram, the manifested human form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, was first conceived in the Mana (heart and mind) of Lord Shiva who is the most enlightened, the most self-realised and the wisest amongst all the Gods. This divine, sacred and holy story of Lord Ram emerged in Lord Shiva's Mana while he was submerged in meditation, reflection and contemplation upon Lord Ram and repeating the Lord's holy name.

The eclectic spiritual story of the life and time of Lord Ram, usually known as the 'Ramayan', that was first conceived by Lord Shiva in his Mana and later revealed by him is called the "Ram Charit Manas". The nomenclature of the story, viz. "Ram Charit Manas", briefly means 'the sacred, divine and holy story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, that describes the time, life and acts of the Lord during his sojourn on earth as a human being, as they are revealed, enshrined and revered in the Mana, the heart and mind, of his devotees'.

In this Chapter we shall trace the Genesis of the Story of the 'Ram Charit Manas', or the 'Ramayan' as it was conceived in the heart and mind of Lord Shiva, and revealed by the Lord exactly as it emerged in his holy Mana that was purified by constant meditation, reflection and contemplation on Brahm in the form of Lord Ram.

We will read how this story passed on from Lord Shiva's Mana first to his consort Parvati or Uma, and then to two selected blessed souls (sage Lomus and saint-crow Kaagbhusund). From Kaagbhusund this wonderful and eclectic story was heard by sage Yagyavalkya, who divulged it to sage Bharadwaj, and then from him it spread amongst the great sages and seers of his time. As time passed, the story passed from one generation of listeners to the next, and in due course of time it percolated down to even the lowest rung of creatures, giving everyone who wished an eternal source of spiritual joy, happiness and bliss. It is the same story of 'Ram Charit Manas' that has come down to us when it was penned by the great saint-poet named Goswami Tulsidas for the spiritual good and welfare of our present and future generations. This is clearly mentioned by him in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Chaupai line nos. 7 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 12; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 31; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 34; (v) Chaupai

line nos. 7-13 that precede Doha no. 35; and (b) Uttar Kand, Shloka no. 1 that follows Doha no. 130.

(1) As we have already read, this divine, sacred and holy story of Lord Ram, known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’, or the ‘Ramayan’, was first conceived or revealed in the Mana (heart and mind) of Lord Shiva while he was meditating, reflecting and contemplating on the divine form of Brahm as Lord Ram, and repeating the Lord’s holy name for his spiritual practice. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9, 11-12 that precede Doha no. 35.}

Hence, it is also called the ‘Aadi Ramayan’, or the most ancient, the first and the original version of the story that describes the life and time of Lord Ram, a manifested form of the Supreme Being on earth.

Lord Shiva is no ordinary God. He is the third God of the Trinity consisting of the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu, and the concluder Shiva. Lord Shiva is regarded as the wisest, the most enlightened and highly self-realised amongst all the Gods. He remains immersed and absorbed in doing meditation, reflection and contemplation; he is calm and poised; he is a perfect Yogi (ascetic) and a patron deity of ascetics; and he is the only God who is praised by Lord Ram himself to the extent that the Lord has explicitly declared that if one wishes to attain him, the seeker or the aspirant must first please Lord Shiva. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.

(2) Lord Shiva had first revealed the story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ to his consort Parvati, also known by the name of Uma. She was the first one to hear this divine nectar-like story that provides spiritual fulfilment, bliss, beatitude and immortality to the hearer. {(i) Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Uma or Parvati was, however, a ‘goddess’, one who has no physical body or form like other living beings in this creation. So, like a Wise One who has discovered some profound secret or a priceless gem that can rid everyone of all their poverty and wants, temporal as well as spiritual, Lord Shiva thought to himself that it would not be proper and wise to keep this nectar-like spiritual story of Lord Ram, that he had already revealed to his consort Parvati, under wraps. If he did so, he thought, it would be too selfish for him and would be like a miserly father or teacher who keeps some priceless piece of gem or key to a great treasury or body of knowledge secret and hidden from his off-spring or student. It would be equivalent to a parent who has some huge pot of gold hidden under-ground but fails to tell his son about it before he dies, and the son spends the rest of his life struggling to make ends meet while that hidden treasure sinks deeper and deeper into the earth with the passage of time!

Lord Shiva thought that if he did not tell this story of Lord Ram to some worthy Jiva (a living being) then he would be depriving the coming generations of mortal creatures of the world a chance to get the benefit of spiritual peace, happiness, bliss, solace and succour at a time when they would be surrounded on all sides by delusions and the countless miseries, pains and torments associated with the cycle of birth and death in life in this mortal world. This would be too harsh for the creatures of the world, and it would surely not be in line with the merciful and compassionate nature of Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva decided that the creatures should be offered an option by which they can overcome the countless spiritual delusions leading to endless miseries, pains

and torments that would overwhelm one and all in this mortal gross world, and rob them of happiness, joy and peace in life. It is not good that they be restricted from accessing this golden pot of spiritual nectar.

(3) Hence, Lord Shiva was on the lookout for some blessed soul, some worthy living being to whom he can reveal the story of Lord Ram, known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas or the Ramayan’. In due course of time he found two such candidates—one was sage Lomus, and the other was the saintly soul named Kaagbhusund.

Out of the two, the first one to whom Lord Shiva revealed this magnificent source of spiritual nectar was the exalted sage Lomus. Thus, sage Lomus is the first great sage who had heard this story of Lord Ram directly from Lord Shiva. The sage himself had acknowledged this to Kaagbhusund at the time of blessing the latter. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 113.}

(4) The second listener to whom Lord Shiva narrated this story of the ‘Ram Charit Manas’ was the saint-crow Kaagbhusund. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88; and (iii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 94-a.}

We also find that Kaagbhusund was told the story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ by sage Lomus too when the sage had blessed him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 113.}

Therefore we conclude that Kaagbhusund was the first fortunate Jiva who was twice-blessed inasmuch as he had heard this divine story of Lord Ram on two occasions—one when sage Lomus narrated it to him, and the second time when Lord Shiva himself did so. The knowledge of this divine and holy story made him immortal and eternally blissful. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 109 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 and 16 that precede it where Lord Shiva has blessed him and is supported by the Guru; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 114 where sage Lomus has blessed him and is endorsed by the Lord himself.}

Sage Lomus had initially been angry at Kaagbhusund when the latter insisted that the sage enlighten him about the way to worship Lord Ram and have devotion for him even though the sage was trying to preach him on metaphysical philosophy of Brahm which stresses that the Lord has no specific form or name. Kaagbhusund’s persistence annoyed the sage so much that he had even cursed him to become a ‘crow’. But immediately he realised his mistake and blessed Kaagbhusund by narrating the story of Ram Charit Manas to him which made him eternally blessed and blissful. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 110-b—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 114.}

After becoming a crow by his physical body, Kaagbhusund came to live on the summit of Mt. Neel (the Blue Mountain) where he abided for all times to come, living a life of bliss and beatitude by meditating and reflecting upon Lord Ram, repeating the Lord’s holy name, and narrating his divine story. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-11 that precede Doha no. 114.}

While living on the summit of Mt. Neel, Kaagbhusund used to narrate the holy story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ as he had heard it from both sage Lomus as well as Lord Shiva to countless members of his race, the ‘Brotherhood of Birds’. This helped him derive immense satisfaction personally as it helped him to constantly remember his beloved Lord Ram, and it also helped him to spread the good word far and wide. He

succeeded in his efforts because by-and-by sage Yagyavalkya came to know of him and had gone to him to hear the story. Then it is from Yagyavalkya that the story passed to the rest of the sages and seers of his time, and gradually percolated down to reach even the humblest members of the human race. We shall read about it below.

So, the saintly crow Kaagbhusund is the one who gets the credit of first narrating this most ancient, original, uncorrupted and wholesome version of the holy story of Lord Ram in this mortal world for the spiritual benefit of all those who would care to listen to it. It is a story that would become a source of spiritual bliss and joy for the creatures of this mundane world for all times to come. Hence, the version of the Ramayan as narrated by Kaagbhusund in this world obviously becomes the “Aadi Ramayan”, as no one had narrated the story for hearing of ordinary Jivas (living beings) in this world prior to Kaagbhusund.

It ought to be noted here that the only other soul who had heard it directly from Lord Shiva was sage Lomus, and the sage had then narrated it to Kaagbhusund at the time of blessing the latter. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 113.} But Lomus had not preached it to others like Kaagbhusund had done. Hence, the real credit of spreading this divine story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ indeed goes to Kaagbhusund.

And since the version of the Ramayan as we know it today and shall read in our present Book is the original version as conceived and narrated by Lord Shiva in the language of the Gods, and then by the crow-saint Kaagbhusund in the primitive language used by birds, it is aptly called ‘Aadi Ramayan’—the first, the most ancient, the original and the uncorrupted version of the Ramayan.

Now, here we come to a very interesting question—how did Kaagbhusund hear the story of Ram Charit Manas from Lord Shiva? There are two possibilities here as follows:-

(a) One is that after coming to his newly established hermitage on Mt. Neel, he used to spend his time meditating, reflecting and contemplating on Lord Ram. He became deeply involved in his spiritual pursuit and gradually attained great success in it. He was able to attain the mystical state of transcendental existence when his Atma, his soul, would leave his physical gross body to assume an ethereal form in which he could go wherever he wished. This achievement was aided by the boon that sage Lomus had granted him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 113-a along with Chaupai line no. 16 that precede it.}

So it may have been that once Kaagbhusund had assumed an ethereal form of the Atma, the Spirit form, and had gone to the celestial abode of Lord Shiva and heard the story of Ram Charit Manas that the Lord used to narrate to his consort goddess Parvati. Lord Shiva had no reservations in narrating the story to Kaagbhusund as the Lord knew him very well and had also blessed him on a previous occasion. The Lord knew that Kaagbhusund was a great devotee of Lord Ram, and therefore he was perfectly eligible to be told the story of Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-10 and 16 that precede Doha no. 109; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-12 that precede Doha no. 113.}

Lord Shiva was speaking in a language of the Gods, the language which would, with the passage of time, become the foundation of all languages that were to evolve in due course of time. To wit, the primary language in which Shiva told the story of Lord Ram was “the Aadi Tongue, the Aadi Language”, the forbearer of all languages and tongues by which the world would eventually speak, and it primarily consisted of vowels and very closely resembled the sound of OM, the cosmic sound

of Consciousness. Kaagbhusund could understand this language because he had gone to Lord Shiva in the ethereal form of the Atma, the soul, which is pure consciousness and all-knowing. When Shiva observed that Kaagbhusund was quietly hearing the story of Ram Charit Manas which he was narrating to Parvati, he had no reservations. The Lord knew that though Kaagbhusund's physical form was that of a 'crow', but he was an exalted sage and an extremely wise, enlightened, self-realised and saintly soul who had been blessed by Lord Ram himself. He had the excellent virtues of having deep devotion, faith, reverence and affection for Lord Ram, of possessing wisdom, true knowledge, enlightenment, self-realisation, humility and piety. So he was a perfect candidate to whom the glorious story of the Ramayan could be divulged without reservations.

(b) The second possibility of 'how Kaagbhusund heard the story of Ram Charit Manas from Lord Shiva' is equally interesting. Since Kaagbhusund was a highly self-realised, spiritually enlightened and a wise soul, so though he was a crow by birth he did not live like an ordinary bird engaged in the routine affairs of life in this mundane world. So he chose to lead a life like that of a hermit and an ascetic, a life of meditation, penance and austerities, a peaceful and serene life in the upper reaches of the Himalayas, the mountain range where great sages and seers went to get spiritual solace and peace, surrounded by the calmness and the beauty of Nature. This is why he established his hermitage on the secluded summit of Mt. Neel.

Being a 'bird', Kaagbhusund could fly high in the sky, and this was a boon for him for he used to soar high and glide in the sky above the mountain range in search of places where he would find some great sage or hermit observing spiritual practices so that he could pay his obeisance to him and draw inspiration. Once upon a time he happened to fly atop Mt. Kailash on the bank of the pristine pure lake known as Mansarovar. This place is said to be the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva where the Lord dwelt with Parvati. Seeing the lake of calm and crystal clear water, Kaagbhusund descended to take a dip in it and freshen himself, and to his amazement he discovered that Lord Shiva was telling some esoteric story to his consort Parvati somewhere nearby. So he quietly sat down and listened attentively. Shiva observed him but did not shoo him away as the Lord found that Kaagbhusund was very focused in his attention and was listening to the rendering of this holy and divine story with all the signs of devotion and love for it, such as he had tears in his eyes, his ears stood on their ends so as to not miss a single word, his face glowed with joy and delight, and his body was so thrilled that his feathers stood on their ends.

In the absence of any authoritative text to refer to, we can only reconstruct how the events may have unfolded by application of intelligent reasoning, analysis of available facts and drawing logical conclusions from them that are based on whatever evidence we can cull from the story itself as we know it now.

Since the divine and holy story of Lord Ram known as the 'Ram Charit Manas or the Ramayan' was first narrated by Lord Shiva, and both sage Lomus and the saintly crow Kaagbhusund were the first Jivas (living beings) who had heard it directly from the Lord, thus the version of the story of the Ramayan as recited later on by Kaagbhusund becomes the "Aadi Ramayan" for the physical world in which we live.

Lord Shiva asked Kaagbhusund not to divulge to anyone from where he has heard this magnificent story. The Lord did not want that hordes of sages and seers would flock to his hermitage requesting him to preach the story to them as well, as it would immensely be a cause of disturbance for him and would interfere with his meditation, reflection and contemplation. He also did not want that this story land in

the hands of some unscrupulous fellow who would distort, corrupt and dilute its message to suit his own whims and fancies. So Shiva took a word of honour from Kaagbhusund not to divulge the source of the story to anyone; the Lord instructed him to desist from naming him as the original source of the story.

After returning to his hermitage on Mt. Neel, Kaagbhusund engaged in disseminating the knowledge that he had got to other birds so that he could share his spiritual joy and blessedness with others like a true saint who shares all the good things he has. Another reason why Kaagbhusund decided to narrate the story of Ram Charit Manas was that it gave him immense happiness and helped him remember his beloved Lord Ram.

But he kept his promise to Shiva by not divulging to Garud that he had heard the 'Ram Charit Manas' from Lord Shiva (as clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30}, and instead telling him that he had heard it from his Guru, sage Lomus. So we read that when Garud asked him from where he got this wonderful story he deflected the query and cited some other source, saying that he had heard it from his Guru (preceptor and moral teacher). {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 94—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 95, and Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 113.}

(5) Kaagbhusund used to narrate the story of the Ram Charit Manas (the Ramayan or the Aadi Ramayan) regularly to his peers and compatriots, the birds of different kind of feathers, who would collect at his hermitage. Among the humans, the first one who had heard it from Kaagbhusund was the acclaimed sage Yagyavalkya. He was the first sage, and therefore the first human teacher, to whom Kaagbhusund revealed the story of the Ramayan. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.} [A brief life-sketch of sage Yagyavalkya is appended as a note to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45 quoted later on in this Chapter.]

Sage Yagyavalkya was not an ordinary sage. He was the most enlightened and the wisest sage of his time, one who was unanimously declared the best Tattwa-Gyani (one who is fully conversant with the transcendental truth of the cosmic Consciousness, and has exceptional spiritual wisdom and knowledge of the principles of metaphysics) of his era during a congregation of great sages and seers of his time. Refer: Shukla Yajur Veda's 2nd Upanishad known as 'Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad', Canto 3, Brahman 7, verse no. 12, and Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse 27 it is established that Yagyavalkya cannot be defeated by anyone in a debate metaphysics and topics related to Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. So, if Yagyavalkya had found exceptional spiritual value and exceeding personal fulfilment in the story of Lord Ram, i.e. in the Ramayan, then in all sooth and without gainsay this divine and holy story is indeed like nectar that provides spiritual blessedness and beatitude of an unmatched kind.

Now it would be interesting to read how sage Yagyavalkya, a human being, would hear the story from a 'crow', and understand the story along with its finer spiritual nuances thoroughly. Let us see.

Sage Yagyavalkya was no ordinary sage; he was the most knowledgeable and learned person of his era, one who had some special skills that no other sage or seer of his time possessed. One such expertise was his ability to understand the language of non-humans, such as the birds. So it was easy for him to understand the story of the Ramayan as preached by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund to other birds.

It may have so happened (now, this is a conjecture based on application of intelligence and rationale thought regarding the way things must have happened hundreds of thousands of years ago because no conclusive proof can ever be had of what actually did happen, especially in the absence of any authoritative text to which one can refer) that once Yagyavalkya was sitting in his hermitage and meditating when he heard some exceptionally delighted birds who were flying over his hermitage—perhaps they were a flock of migratory birds on their way to their destination in some distant land—chirping excitedly and talking joyfully about a certain wonderful and exhilarating story that they had heard somewhere, a story that filled them with cheer and spiritual bliss like they had never experienced ever before.

Yagyavalkya became curious, and since he could understand and speak in their tongue, he asked some of these birds what it was that they were so excited about, and where had they heard this story. Upon learning the details, he became eager to hear it himself as it was something novel for him, something he had not heard of earlier. So he went to the hermitage of the saintly crow Kaagbhusund to hear the divine, holy and sacred story of Ramayan being narrated by him.

When he had heard the full story, he was extremely thrilled, delighted and ecstatic beyond his own imagination. He discovered that though he was a ‘Brahm-Gyani’, i.e. one who is fully conversant with the esoteric, mysterious and transcendental knowledge of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, he had never felt or experienced the sort of extreme spiritual joy and exhilaration that this unique story gave him. So he decided to embrace it full-heartedly. It was like a newly discovered treasure trove of spiritual bliss, blessedness, beatitude, felicity and fulfilment for Yagyavalkya.

When Yagyavalkya returned to his own hermitage, he was so overwhelmed with joy and ecstasy that he decided that this spiritual gem should not to be kept buried in sacred like a piece of a miser’s jewel, but shared widely for the welfare of human kind. Thus, he decided to share this spiritual nectar with other great, wise and enlightened sages and seers of his time who would first properly understand the story itself and then propagate its message in the correct way, without distortions, dilution or corruptions.

(6) The story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ was then revealed by sage Yagyavalkya to sage Bharadwaj. So, except sages Lomus and Yagyavalkya, Bharadwaj was initially the only other great sage and seer of his time to be acquainted with the story of Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30.} [A brief life-sketch of sage Bharadwaj is appended as a note to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45 later on in this Chapter.]

How did Bharadwaj hear this story from sage Yagyavalkya? Bharadwaj had his hermitage at Prayag, the holy pilgrim site on the banks of the confluence of three holy rivers, viz. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati. Every year a huge religious festival was organised at Prayag where a huge congregation of sages and seers assembled. During these assemblies religious texts were discussed, taught and explained, and spiritual discourses given. Once upon a time Yagyavalkya had also come to attend one such assembly of great scholars, and after others had left for their own places when the festival ended, Bharadwaj asked him to stay back and tell him the story of the Ramayan which only he knew. Bharadwaj had noticed that a special glow of spiritual blessedness emanated from the face of Yagyavalkya. So he asked the sage to tell him the reason. Surely, Yagyavalkya was only too glad to oblige him, and he told Bharadwaj that ever since he had heard the story of the Ramayan (from

Kaagbhusund) he has been in a state of ecstasy and blessedness. Then Yagyavalkya cheerfully narrated the story to Bharadwaj, and this is how the sacred story passed from the former to the latter. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Doha no. 47; and (ii) Sotha no. 124-b.}

(7) Both the sages, Yagyavalkya and Bharadwaj, shared the natural sense of bliss and joy that comes by narrating and hearing the story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’. Bharadwaj decided that it was not something to be hidden from others, but rather it should be liberally shared and widely spread for the spiritual welfare of all living beings. So in the next assembly of great sages and seers that was held at Prayag when he played host to them, he narrated the story to all who had come to attend the religious fair.

All heard this story, and when they returned to their own hermitages they preached it to their own line of disciples. It is from here and in this general way that the sacred, divine and holy story of the Ramayan spread far and wide to all corners of the world.

(8) Amongst the prominent sages to whom the story of Ram Charit Manas passed from sage Bharadwaj was sage Agastya; he was the most senior amongst the sages and seers who had heard the story from Bharadwaj at Prayag’s religious fair. The story inspired him so much that he began to preach it himself. Even Lord Shiva had gone to his hermitage to hear the story once again. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 48.} [A brief life-sketch of sage Agastya is appended as a note to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48 later on in this Chapter.]

(9) Then we learn that the crow-saint Kaagbhusund tells this sacred story of the Ramayan to Garud, the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu. This particular narration is the subject matter of our present Book “Kaag-Bhusund Ramyan or the Aadi Ramayan”. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Doha no. 125.}

(10) By-and-by, as the divine story of Lord Ram spread far and wide, and its spiritual significance and importance became famous and well established, many great sages and seers either came to Yagyavalkya’s hermitage to hear the Ramayan, or listened to it during religious gatherings at Prayag or at the hermitages of those who were acquainted with the story. ‘Ram Charit Manas’ became well-known and the most respected of the various versions of the divine stories associated with the life and time of Lord Ram, stories that are commonly known as ‘Ramayan’. It is a story that had the potential to bestow spiritual bliss, peace and joy to the narrator and the listener alike. It was easy to understand, simple and uncomplicated in the flow of narrative and the sequence of events, and interesting enough to keep the listener attentive. So it was well accepted. This is how this story spread. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 35; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45.}

Now, this leads us to another interesting development that had happened at that ancient period of time. As time passed and the story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ got wings and spread to virtually all the hermitages where numerous sages and seers started narrating it, the news finally reached the ears of Lord Shiva. The Lord was first very happy, but at the same time he felt a wee bit worried. He was happy that so many creatures of this mortal world now get access to spiritual happiness and joy as

well as find liberation from sorrows and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death with the least effort by hearing this sacred story—and to that end it was desired and good. But what if the story was twisted or corrupted or distorted or diluted or interpolated so such an extent that its main aim, its primary objective was lost? Shiva was sceptical of the humans; he knew how a man is selfish and clever enough to turn things around in a crooked way when it suits his vested interests, or how he would pass on the wrong thing as the original without even feeling a pang of guilt inside his heart. So he wanted to verify.

We can look at this point from another angle. As time passed and ages changed, the story went from one generation of preacher and listener to another. Each preacher or narrator or teacher told this story according to his own understanding, as well as adapting and adjusting it from time to time to the prevalent culture, time, era and circumstances and the level of understanding of his listeners so as to make the story more relevant and interesting for them. If the generations of teachers of this story hadn't been flexible enough to tweak it a bit here and there, the original story would have lost its relevance and become boring for the newer generations who could not relate to the ancient time when Shiva actually told this story to Parvati and Kaagbhusund. But a problem crept in due to this process of adaptation and adjustment—the pristine purity and originality of the divine story of the Ramayan was lost. Many interpolations and interjections were made in it as it spread its wings to different geographical areas of the world. As far as only the story is concerned, it was alright that it had undergone adaptations and changes to suit the culture, the time and the place of its narration, but the Ramayan was not an ordinary story—it was a virtual tonic for the soul, it was a remedy for the suffering of the soul the creature, it was a nectar which would lose its sanctity and effectiveness if it was tampered with as no medicine should be adulterated if it is retain its potentials and efficacy.

But this story of the Ramayan was no ordinary tale, especially because for Lord Shiva it was the dearest thing close to his heart he loved and revered Lord Ram and worshipped him as his beloved Deity whom he honoured as his only Lord God. So it became important and necessary for Lord Shiva to verify and ascertain if the story of Lord Ram, the story of the Ramayan that came to known as the 'Ram Charit Manas', that he had conceived in the chambers of his subtle heart that was made holy and pure like a shrine by the remembrance of the Divine Lord, and in his mind that was made pure and had achieved a transcendental level of intellectual attainment by doing meditation, reflection and contemplation, has indeed retained its purity, sanctity, holiness, divinity and sacredness. Lord Shiva wished to determine that the story of Ram Charit Manas had retained its usefulness as a spiritual nectar that provides peace, bliss, happiness, joy, liberation and deliverance to the creature even as it spread far and wide in this world. He was worried only on one count—and it was the fear of it being distorted, diluted, interpolated, tweaked or corrupted by someone amongst the plethora of preachers and narrators of the story who may take liberty with its spiritual content and derail the intent of Lord Shiva who had conceived it as a gold-standard for attaining spiritual bliss and joy as well as freedom and deliverance from the miseries and torments associated with gross mundane existence in this mortal world. So the Lord decided to find it out himself.

Therefore, Lord Shiva first went to the hermitage of Kaagbhusund disguised as a 'bird' to hear the latter narrate the story of Ramayan—because it was Kaagbhusund who was the first 'Jiva', i.e. a living being with a physical gross body, who had started the practice of regular narration of the story of the 'Ram Charit Manas' so that anyone who was interested could come and hear it. Shiva went there as

a ‘bird’ to hide his identity because he wished to make sure that Kaagbhusund did not recognise him. This was to ensure that he would get to listen to the story as it was being narrated by the crow-saint in a routine manner. Had Kaagbhusund got the wind that Lord Shiva had himself come to his hermitage to hear the story, there were chances that he would have repeated the exact version as told to him by the Lord, without any distortion. But Shiva’s mission was to find out the truth, and so it was crucial that he go there incognito. When Shiva heard Kaagbhusund’s narrative, he was very satisfied as the narration was true and honest and in accordance with what he (Shiva) had originally conceived, and later on narrated to Parvati, sage Lomus and to Kaagbhusund himself. There was no distortion or interpolation of any kind in the narrative. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 57.}

This also meant that sage Lomus’ version which the sage had told Kaagbhusund was also true to the original version as narrated by Lord Shiva—because Kaagbhusund was first initiated in this story by Lomus, and if there was any difference between the sage’s version and what Lord Shiva had told him later on, then surely Kaagbhusund would have enquired from Shiva which was the correct story.

After patiently hearing the narration of the story from the crow-saint Kaagbhusund and endorsing it, Lord Shiva enquired from him how come sage Yagyavalkya had heard the story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’, whereupon the crow-saint told him that once the sage came to his hermitage and sat down quietly while he was narrating the divine story to other birds as was his daily routine and habit. Kaagbhusund assured Lord Shiva that he had not narrated the story of the Ramayan specifically for Yagyavalkya, but what could he do if someone comes and sits quietly in a corner to hear it. Surely he can’t chase him away; it would not only be impolite but unethical as it would be like denying some eager soul access to spiritual nectar and knowledge, something no saint would ever do.

When Shiva learnt that sage Yagyavalkya had come alone to Kaagbhusund’s hermitage, he felt comfortable because he was well-aware of the sage’s great reputation as being a wise, enlightened, self-realised, honest and truthful ‘Brahm-Gyani’, a person who had ‘true knowledge of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness’. Shiva was sure that a person of Yagyavalkya’s stature and reputation just simply cannot distort the story of Ramayan and ruin its pristine purity.

Lord Shiva was absolutely sure that neither sage Lomus or sage Yagyavalkya would ever distort it for the Lord knew that they were highly enlightened and one of the wisest sages of that time. There were however chances that those who have heard it from them may have interpolated something from their side to dilute the story; he feared that some other sage would inject some novelty in the story to spice it up. So he decided to check it from a third preacher who was preaching this story to others but who had not directly heard it either from sages Lomus or Yagyavalkya as was the case with Kaagbhusund and sage Bharadwaj respectively.

Then he meditated to find out who else had heard it. He discovered that it was another great sage named Bharadwaj. Again, Shiva was sure that there was no chance of the story being distorted by Bharadwaj either as the latter was no less enlightened and wiser than Yagyavalkya was. But then it was not limited to these two enlightened ones any more—for when it was preached at a religious fair at Prayag, many other sages and seers had heard it. Shiva decided to find out if any one of them had fiddled with the divine story which he had conceived as a means of attaining spiritual bliss and blessedness.

So, Lord Shiva decided to approach Agastya and hear how this sage handles the narration of the story of the Ramayan. So Shiva took Parvati along and went to the hermitage of sage Agastya to hear the story directly from him. Sage Agastya was perfect in his narration, and Shiva heard it very attentively from him. The Lord felt delighted and exhilarated so much so that he was ecstatic with joy and even lost awareness of himself. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 48; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51.}

An important message is to be understood here. The first point is that it was Shiva who had first conceived the story of Ramayan, known as the “Ram Charit Manas”, in his Mana (heart and mind), and therefore no one knows the story better than him. But when Shiva decided to go and hear it from Kaagbhusund and Agastya, he had no shame in doing so; he did not feel shy that he would be sitting amongst other listeners and hearing the story as if he does not know anything about it. Then, when he heard the story that he had himself conceived being re-told by both Kaagbhusund and Agastya, he felt extremely elated and ecstatic with joy as if he had found some new source of spiritual blessedness!

The second point is that Shiva listened very attentively to the story being re-told by Kaagbhusund and Agastya. Not for a moment did he allow his mind to get distracted from the details of the narrative. It was this concentration of mind that filled Shiva with spiritual bliss and ecstasy. On the other hand, his consort Parvati’s mind was distracted, and the effect was that she became a victim of delusions. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Doha no. 55; and (ii) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57 which describe how Parvati’s delusions persisted even when her husband Lord Shiva had tried repeatedly to tell her that Lord Ram was not a human being as she thought him to be, but the Supreme Lord himself in that form—in spite of the fact that Parvati had heard the whole story of the ‘Ram Charit Manas’ being narrated by sage Agastya because she had accompanied Lord Shiva when he had gone there to hear the narration.}

Therefore, the message is this: First, that the divine and holy story of Lord Ram, i.e. the “Ram Charit Manas”, spiritually benefits the narrator and the listener alike. Secondly, it should be told and heard with due devotion, faith and concentration of mind if one were to really benefit from it. Otherwise, it is reduced to just an ancient mythological story of no real spiritual value as was experienced by Parvati who remained submerged in delusions in spite of hearing it. The divine story of Lord Ram as narrated in ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is powerful enough to act like a bridge that would help a creature to cross this vast and endless ocean of birth and death very easily and comfortably if the creature reveres this story as a medium for his redemption, as a tool for his liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 15; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129.}

Meanwhile, there was a problem with sage Agastya. What was it? Though it is true that his narration of the story of the Ramayan was correct to the last dot, the sage could not develop the virtue of ‘Bhakti’ or devotion for Lord Ram inside his inner-self, something which is the main objective of preaching, listening and reading this story. The wise sage acknowledged this shortcoming in himself, and asked Lord Shiva to preach him about ‘Bhakti’ so that he becomes fulfilled and feels fully rewarded for having heard the Ramayan himself and endeavouring to spread the good word by preaching it to others. Shiva willingly obliged the sage and preached Lord Ram’s

Bhakti or devotion to him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 48; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51.}

To sum up, it must be remembered that the essential requirements for hearing the divine and holy story of Lord Ram are to listen it attentively, with faith and devotion, and after discarding ego and pride. These facts are clearly laid out in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 124-b.

(11) However, since there were countless souls in this world who by this time had started hearing and narrating the story of Ramayan, there was bound to be changes in its finer details. Not all these versions were endorsed by Lord Shiva, as he had exclusively endorsed the version that is known today as ‘Ram Charit Manas’, the version narrated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund. So for spiritual purposes and for the purity and sanctity of the story of Lord Ram, the version of Kaagbhusund is the only authentic version; it is therefore the ‘Aadi Ramayan’ as it is the first and the only authentic version of the Ramayan.

(12) Now, this said, let us come to the present era in which we live, the age known as ‘Kaliyug’, and examine how this story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ was made available to us. The credit goes to the great saint-poet-philosopher of India, named Goswami Tulsidas. He had heard it from his Guru (teacher and preceptor) at a place called Sukar-Kshetra. The story of the Ramayan had such a profound impact on the heart and mind of Tulsidas that it submerged him in spiritual bliss and joy so much that he decided to tell it in the local dialect known as ‘Avadhi’, a variant of Hindi which is the main language of the masses of India. He did it for two reasons: one was to derive spiritual peace, joy, solace and contentedness for himself, and the other was to propagate this divine and holy story of the Lord for the benefit of the masses so that they too can enjoy its spiritual rewards. This is the primary reason why he wrote Ram Charit Manas in the local dialect of Avadhi—so that the common man can easily access it and feel comfortable with its narration as it was in his own language. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 30-b—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-13 that precedes Doha no. 35; and (iii) Uttar Kand, Shloka no. 1 that follows Doha no. 130.}

The version which Goswami Tulsidas narrates in the book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of which ‘Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan’ is a part is the same story that Lord Shiva had narrated to goddess Parvati and to the crow-saint Kaagbhusund, by sage Lomus to Kaagbhusund, by sage Yagyavalkya to sage Bharadwaj, and Kaagbhusund to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu.

Hence, ‘Ram Charit Manas’ as we read it now is the version that was originally conceived by Lord Shiva in his Mana (mind and heart), and is also the purest and undiluted version of that sacred story as it was passed from one generation of exalted, self-realised, enlightened, and truly wise and honest sages, seers and saints to another generation down the ages.

(B) Nomenclature: This divine and holy story of Lord Ram, that is generally known as the “Ramayan”, is given three nomenclatures here in the version narrated by Kaagbhusund as well as by Tulsidas—

(a) “Ram Charit Manas” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 11-13 that precede Doha no. 35; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 113).

(b) “Ram Charit Sara” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 94; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 113).

(c) “Hari Charit Manas” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53).

(d) “Ram Katha” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 31).

(e) And “The Aadi Ramayan”—the first, the most ancient, the original and the primary form of the story of Lord Ram.

Let us now examine the authority from where these names have been derived as well as their significance.

The title “Ram Charit Manas” briefly means ‘the sacred, divine and holy story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, that describes the time, life and acts of the Lord during his sojourn on earth as a human being, as they are revealed, enshrined and revered in the Mana, the heart and mind, of his devotees’. The first such devotee was Lord Shiva, and subsequently it was the saintly crow Kaagbhusund, and thereafter so many countless other devotees, including Tulsidas.

The second title “Ram Charit Sara” means ‘the symbolic lake that contains the spiritually purifying and the rejuvenating nectar for the soul (of the living being) that is in the form of the divine, sacred and holy story of Lord Ram which describes the time, life and acts of the Lord during his sojourn on earth as a human being’. This name ‘Ram Charit Sara’ honours the ‘lake’ called Mansarovar on the banks of which Kaagbhusund had heard this divine and blessed story of Lord Ram known as ‘Ram Charit’ that is spiritually liberating and a provider of bliss and freedom from all the sufferance to which a creature is subjected to in life in this mundane mortal world.

The title “Hari Charit” means the life and time of Lord Hari. Since Lord Ram was a human manifestation of Lord Vishnu, who is also known by the name of ‘Hari’, the story or the ‘Charit’ of Lord Ram is also called “Hari Charit”.

Since this is a ‘story’ that describes the life and deeds of Lord Ram, it is known as ‘Ram Katha’ because the word ‘Katha’ means a story, a chronicle of events associated with the life and time of Lord Ram.

Finally, this magnificent story is also called the “Aadi Ramayan” because it is the most ancient, the first, the original and the primary version of the story of the life and time of Lord Ram. It was first conceived in the Mana (mind and heart) of Lord Shiva, the most enlightened and the wisest of the Gods, during his meditation sessions. Prior to it this divine story was not known to anyone. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 35.}

Lord Shiva was the first one to narrate it to Parvati, then to sage Lomus, and finally to the saintly soul Kaagbhusund from whom this spring of spiritual nectar descended down to reach ordinary mortals.

Our present Book titled ‘Kaag-Bhusund Ramyan’ is narrated in the Uttar Kand of ‘Ram Charit Manas’. It is the most ancient version of the divine and holy story of Lord Ram narrated in an ancient language, the “Aadi tongue”, by Lord Shiva who narrated it in the language of the Gods, and then by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund who narrated in the primitive language spoken by birds. A crow ‘crows’ using its throat, and the sound it produces is a series of vowels. This method of expression was the basis of the spoken language as we know it now. As complexities of knowledge increased and there was felt a greater need for more sounds to express the newly

acquired information, the consonants evolved. As we know, the vowel sounds are at the foundation of consonants. So, the version of the Ramayan narrated by the bird Kaagbhusund in his primitive language is known as the 'Aadi Ramayan'. The modern version of it is known as the Ram Charit Manas by Goswami Tulsidas who had penned it in 'Avadhi', an offshoot of Hindi which is the national language of modern India and one of the many modern languages of today's world.

(C) The Authority and the Authentication of the Story of 'Ram Charit Manas' and 'The Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan' which is also known as the 'Aadi Ramayan':

The divine, sacred and the holy Story of the life and time of Lord Ram, an tale of epic proportions that is universally known as 'The Ramayan', has many variations. But the original and the authenticate version is the one which is known as 'Ram Charit Manas' as well as 'The Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan', the latter being also called the 'Aadi Ramayan', the most ancient, the original and the primary version of the The Ramayan.

As we have already read in the first section of this Chapter, under the heading 'Genesis of the Story of the Ramayan', the story was first conceived in the Mana of Lord Shiva. Then the Lord narrated it to his consort Parvati, who is also known as Uma, Girija and Bhavani. He had also narrated it to the saintly crow Kaagbhusund.

Then in due course of time the story spread far and wide through a wide range of narrators and teachers who adapted it according to their own understanding and interpretation of the story, and also to make it more relevant to the prevalent culture, the society and the audience of the time. In brief, the original version that Lord Shiva had told Parvati and Kaagbhusund underwent many changes.

However, there is one version that still retained the pristine form of the original story told by Lord Shiva—and it is the story as it is narrated in the 'Ram Charit Manas' as well as in the 'The Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan'. The reason is that they directly quote Lord Shiva; they are a re-telling of the conversation between Shiva and his consort Parvati.

In the case of 'Ram Charit Manas', the story is revealed when Parvati asked Shiva to tell her the story of Lord Ram in detail so that all her doubts about the Lord's divinity, holiness and supremacy in this creation as its Supreme Lord could be dispelled for good. Lord Shiva's answer is what we come to know as the 'Ram Charit Manas'. This is explicitly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113.

In the case of 'Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan', it was again a conversation between Parvati and Lord Shiva. When she had asked him the reason why the Lord says that he has told her the story of 'Ram Charit Manas' the way Kaagbhusund had narrated it to Garud, Lord Shiva answered her by recounting the all events that led Garud to go and hear the divine story of Lord Ram from the crow saint Kaagbhusund. Thus was revealed the 'Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan' as a conversation between Lord Shiva and Parvati. This is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 55.

Thus it is clear that the story which we shall read in this book is the one coming down to us directly from Lord Shiva.

The Lord had himself heard the story of Ram Charit Manas as it was narrated by Kaagbhusund. Now he re-tells the same story to Parvati. Hence, this story is the 'Ramayan according to Kaagbhusund', and its authenticity and originality has been

endorsed by Lord Shiva himself. This fact assumes great significance because Lord Shiva is the one who had first conceived this divine story in his Mana, and if he was satisfied by hearing it being narrated by Kaagbhusund and quotes the latter to his consort Parvati, then it goes without saying that the version of the Ramayan that Kaagbhusund preached, the version known as ‘The Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan’ is exactly like the version that Lord Shiva had conceived first and then narrated it directly to Parvati for the first time, the version known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’.

(D) The verses of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ that authenticate the pristine form of the divine Story of Lord Ram that was first narrated by Lord Shiva and then re-narrated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund in what is known as ‘The Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan’:-

Since this Book is considered as a ‘sacred book’, I did not wish to change the sequence of the verses as they appear in the original Text. In the earlier sections of this Chapter where details of the Genesis of the Story, its Nomenclature and its Authority are described, full reference of the relevant verses are given so that it would be easy for a reader to identify them as he reads along.

The Genesis of the Story:

(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 30:-

संभु कीन्ह यह चरित सुहावा । बहुरि कृपा करि उमहि सुनावा ॥ ३ ॥
सोइ सिव कागभुसुंदिहि दीन्हा । राम भगत अधिकारी चीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

sambhu kīnha yaha carita suhāvā. bahuri kṛpā kari umahi sunāvā. 3.
sō'i siva kāgabhusuṇḍihi dīnhā. rāma bhagata adhikārī cīnhā. 4.

Lord Shambhu (Shiva) was the first one who had created this story that is so beautiful and pleasant (to hear and remember)¹. He then graciously told or revealed it to Uma, his consort². (3)

It is the same story that the Lord (Shiva) gave (i.e. told or revealed) to Kaagbhusund when he found that the latter was eligible to hear this story and was worthy to receive it as he had immense Bhakti (devotion, faith, reverence and affection) for Lord Ram. (4)

[¹To wit, Lord Shiva had conceived this sacred, divine and holy story of Lord Ram in his Mana—i.e. he had conceived it in his mind and enshrined it reverentially in his heart. When the time came he revealed it to his consort. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.

²Why did Shiva reveal this story to Uma has been explained in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 111; and (ii) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 55.]

तेहि सन जागबलिक पुनि पावा । तिन्ह पुनि भरद्वाज प्रति गावा ॥ ५ ॥
ते श्रोता बकता समसीला । सर्वंदरसी जानहिं हरिलीला ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi sana jāgabalika puni pāvā. tinha puni bharadvāja prati gāvā. 5.
tē śrōtā bakatā samasīlā. savam̐darasī jānahim harilīlā. 6.

Then from him (i.e. from Kaagbhhusund), sage Yagyavalkya had received this story, and subsequently he (Yagyavalkya) had recited it to sage Bharadvaj (or ‘sung’ it for him). (5)

These two sages, the hearer as well as the narrator (i.e. sage Bharadvaj who had listened to the story, and Yagyavalkya who had recited it to him), were both exalted, wise, learned and enlightened sages in their own right. They were both equally courteous and possessed equal excellent virtues; they had evenness or uniformity of view and treated everyone alike¹; and they were acquainted with the mysteries of Lord Hari’s (Supreme Being’s) maverick deeds and mystical plays. (6)

[¹To wit, both Yagyavalkya and Bharadvaj were realised souls who did not distinguish between creatures as they knew that the Atma, which indeed is the true self of all living beings, is the same ‘pure consciousness’ that uniformly dwells in all the creatures though the body of one creature is different from the other. They also knew that this Atma of the individual creature is the same as the Supreme Atma of this creation that is known as the Parmatma, or the Supreme Being. The only difference between these two, i.e. between the individual’s Atma and the Parmatma, is the level at which it is understood, for the individual’s Atma exists at the microcosmic level of existence while the Parmatma exists at the macrocosmic level of the same existence. So they treated everyone with equal affection and respect.]

जानहिं तीनि काल निज ग्याना । करतल गत आमलक समाना ॥ ७ ॥
औरउ जे हरिभगत सुजाना । कहहिं सुनहिं समुझहिं बिधि नाना ॥ ८ ॥

jānahim tīni kāla nija gyānā. karatala gata āmalaka samānā. 7.
aura'u jē haribhagata sujānā. kahahim sunahim samujhahim bidhi nānā. 8.

They (i.e. Yagyavalkya and Bharadvaj) had transcendental knowledge: they could actually see and were personally aware of the events of the past, the present as well as of the future just like the case of one personally seeing and feeling the myrobalan fruit that one holds in one’s palms (right before his eyes). (7)

Apart from them, other virtuous, enlightened and noble souls who are devotees of the Lord (Sri Ram), who adore the Lord and worship him, recite or narrate, hear, interpret and understand this story in a variety of ways¹. (8)

[¹To wit, the same story of Lord Ram acquires countless forms and versions depending upon the narrator and the listener. This is because each individual has his own level of wisdom, knowledge and intellect, and so each would interpret and understand the same universal story in his own unique way. Therefore, the way the story is told and passed on from generation to generation it acquires countless colours and connotations.]

(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 30:-

चौ०. जागबलिक जो कथा सुहाई । भरद्वाज मुनिबरहि सुनाई ॥ १ ॥
कहिहउँ सोइ संबाद बखानी । सुनहुँ सकल सज्जन सुखु मानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāgabalika jō kathā suhāī. bharadvāja munibarahi sunāī. 1.
kahiha'um̐ sō'i sambāda bakhānī. sunahum̐ sakala sajjana sukhu mānī. 2.

The sweet and pleasant story (i.e. the story which is divine, holy and sacred to hear) which sage Yagyavalkya had narrated to sage Bharadvaj – (1),

I (here meaning Goswami Tulsidas) shall now narrate the same conversation at length. All those who are good souls, virtuous and pious should listen to it attentively with delight as it would give them joy and happiness. (2)

(iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30:-

दो०. मैं पुनि निज गुर सन सुनी कथा सो सूकरखेत ।
समुझी नहिं तसि बालपन तब अति रहेउँ अचेत ॥ ३० (क) ॥

dōhā.

mair̐ puni nija gura sana sunī kathā sō sūkarakhēta.
samujhī nahim̐ tasi bālapana taba ati rahē'um̐ acēta. 30 (a).

[Goswami Tulsidas says—] Further, I have myself heard this story from my Guru (teacher and preceptor) at a place called 'Sukarkheta'¹. But I could not fully grasp its meaning and import at that time as I was in my childhood days. (Doha no. 30-a)

[¹Sukarkheta or Sukar-shetra is the place where, according to legends, Lord Vishnu had appeared in the form of the Boar ("sukar") to slay the demon named Hiranyaaksha, the elder brother of the demon Hiranyakshipu. In this form, Lord Vishnu had salvaged the earth from remaining submerged in the depths of the ocean where the said demon had hidden it.

In the present day it is in a place called Soron in the west of the state of Uttar Pradesh in India.]

श्रोता बक्ता ग्याननिधि कथा राम कै गूढ़ ।
किमि समुझौं मैं जीव जड़ कलि मल ग्रसित बिमूढ़ ॥ ३० (ख) ॥

śrōtā bakatā gyānanidhi kathā rāma kai gūṛha.
kimi samujhaurṁ mairṁ jīva jaṛa kali mala grasita bimūṛha. 30 (b).

Both the listener and the narrator of the divine story of Lord Ram should be extremely wise, enlightened and intelligent and a repository of spiritual knowledge because this story is very mysterious and deep in its content and import. [To wit, it is beyond comprehension of those who are dull and stupid.]

Say, how could I fully grasp this story as I am a dull creature of a low intellect who is overshadowed by the taints and shortcomings associated with life in Kaliyug (the present era)¹. (Doha no. 30-b)

[¹Tulsidas is being humble and unpretentious when he makes this observation. He implies that a true devotee of Lord Ram must never be boastful and haughty about his spiritual achievements as it would undo whatever he may have gained.

Remember: Tulsidas was not a fool or an illiterate person, and neither was he an ordinary person—because otherwise it would not have been possible for him to pen the marvellous epic book known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’ which till today has had no match. The lucidity, flow and succulence of the verses of this book holds the reader, the recitor and the listener equally enthralled and captivated as if by a wand of magical charm. The fact is that Tulsidas was a blessed soul no less than any of the sages he mentions here—viz. Kaagbhusund, Yagyavalkya or Bharadwaj. It goes to his credit that he prefers to keep a low profile and act humbly like a true devotee of Lord Ram.]

(iv) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 31:-

चौ०. तदपि कही गुर बारहिं बारा । समुझि परी कछु मति अनुसारा ॥ १ ॥
भाषाबद्ध करबि मैं सोई । मोरें मन प्रबोध जेहिं होई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tadapi kahī gura bārahim bārā. samujhi parī kachu mati anusārā. 1.
bhāṣābad'dha karabi mairṁ sōī. mōrēm mana prabōdha jēhim hōī. 2.

Though I could not follow or understand the story of Lord Ram easily, my Guru had patience with me, and he kept on telling it to me repeatedly. But by-and-by I could follow and understand it little by little in accordance to my intellectual abilities¹. (1)

I shall now put that understanding of the story of Lord Ram in simple words using the local dialect as it would give immense satisfaction to me². (2)

[¹There is an important message here. And it is this: If one is unable to fully comprehend the secrets and mysteries of the story of Lord Ram, he must not lose hope but continue with the effort. He should hear the story again and again. In due course of time the darkness of ignorance would clear in a gradual manner, and the sunlight of spiritual knowledge with its sunshine of joy and happiness would dawn in the seeker's inner-self, filling him with a sense of fulfilment, elation and bliss.

²Tulsidas says that he will re-tell the same story which he had heard from his Guru, but in a simple local language which is his mother-tongue and with which he is conversant. He won't use Sanskrit which is the language used by scholars and learned people. This is because he would be better able to put into words whatever little he has understood of the story if he uses a language he knows best—viz. his local mother-tongue.

It ought to be noted here that this is the primary reason why the story of the Ramayan written by Tulsidas with the title “Ram Charit Manas” became so popular and famous—it is because he had written it in the local dialect, using the common language and lexicon that an ordinary person could very easily understand and identify with. So, Tulsidas' version touched the heart of the masses immediately as it was free from complicated jargon and complexities of language and metaphysical or spiritual knowledge that are inherent in other versions of the Ramayan.]

जस कछु बुधि बिबेक बल में । तस कहिहउँ हियँ हरि के प्रेरे ॥ ३ ॥
निज संदेह मोह भ्रम हरनी । करउँ कथा भव सरिता तरनी ॥ ४ ॥

jasa kachu budhi bibēka bala mērēm. tasa kahiha'um'hiyam'hari kē prērēm.

3.

nija sandēha mōha bhrama haranī. kara'um'kathā bhava saritā taranī. 4.

Whatever little wisdom, erudition, knowledge and competence I (i.e. Tulsidas) have, I shall do my best to narrate this divine and holy story as am my heart is inspired to do so by Lord Hari (Sri Ram). (3)

I shall do it also because this sacred and mystical story of the Lord would help me to get rid of my own doubts, delusions and bewilderments (and give me peace and joy unbound)¹. (4)

[¹Tulsidas makes it amply clear that he is going to tell this divine story of Lord Ram in order to eliminate any remanants of darkness caused by worldly delusions that may still be present in his heart and mind. Apart from the fact that the narration of this holy story spiritually benefits the narrator himself, the feeling of satisfaction that he gets when he finds that the listener too is filled with spiritual joy and bliss are additional rewards for him. Both the listener and the narrator therefore benefit by this sacred story of Lord Ram. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Doha no. 30-b herein above.]

(v) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 36:-

In these verses, Tulsidas once again reiterates that (a) this holy, sacred and divine story of Lord Ram, known as Ram Charit Manas, is dear to sages, seers and hermits and they love to hear it, (b) it was first conceived by Lord Shiva who told it to his consort Parvati, and (c) it is the same story that he is now reciting for the benefit of others, and so everyone is welcome to hear it attentively and with due devotion and faith in one's heart.

He says further that this wish to narrate this wonderful story of Lord Ram was inspired in his heart by Lord Shiva, and therefore he concludes that the Lord himself wants him to teach it to others.

रामचरितमानस एहि नामा । सुनत श्रवन पाइअ बिश्रामा ॥ ७ ॥
मन करि बिषय अनल बन जरई । होइ सुखी जौं एहिं सर परई ॥ ८ ॥

rāmacaritamānasa ēhi nāmā. sunata śravana pā'i'a biśrāmā. 7.
mana kari biṣaya anala bana jaraī. hō'i sukhī jāuṁ ēhiṁ sara paraī. 8.

The name of this sacred, holy and divine story (of Lord Ram) is “Ram Charit Manas”¹. One’s ears find extreme solace and peace immediately upon hearing it. [Or, to put it in another way, “one finds immense solace and peace in his inner-self as soon as one’s ears hear this story being narrated”.] (7)

The elephant symbolised by one’s Mana (mind and heart; inner-self) is highly agitated as it is being scorched and greatly tormented by the heat of the fierce fire symbolising passions of the sense organs and temptations of their respective objects in this material gross world. This elephant can get rid of its sufferings and find peace and solace if it plunges in the cool and soothing lake filled with nectar represented by this divine story². (8)

[¹The title of this story is “Ram Charit Manas”. It simply means ‘The story that narrates the life and time of Lord Ram and the deeds done by him, a story that sprouts spontaneously in the Mana or the heart and mind of the narrator, and is enshrined in the Mana of those who narrate it as well as those who listen to it’.

²To wit, if a creature wishes to find emotional peace and stability in a world full of turmoil, if he is tormented by sufferings and grief, then he is advised to listen to this holy story of Lord Ram as it would bestow upon his soul immense amount of bliss and peace.

If we apply this metaphor of the tormented elephant and the lake of cool water in which it plunges to calm its agitated nerves to the story of Ram Charit Manas, it would mean that if a person is feeling highly upset and emotionally agitated, one who feels that he is emotionally empty, spiritually in a void and unfulfilled inspite of having all the material comforts and pleasures of this material world, one who is tormented by the countless problems associated with life and has reached a stage where he is very eager to find an avenue which would lead him to a place that would grant him eternal peace and abiding happiness, then he should head straight to this path of listening to this holy story of Lord Ram being recited by a wise narrator as this would surely restore his peace of mind, give rest to his agitated heart, help him discover spiritual bliss and fulfilment, and fill his innerself with extreme joy and happiness.

In all sooth and without gainsay, the story of Ram Charit Manas benefits the narrator and the listener alike. It is like a symbolic lake represented by a creature’s heart and mind, and it is filled with cool and soothing nectar that provides spiritual bliss and happiness to all those who make the effort to come and take a dip in it by listening to this story.]

रामचरितमानस मुनि भावन । बिरचेउ संभु सुहावन पावन ॥ ९ ॥

त्रिबिध दोष दुख दारिद दावन । कलि कुचालि कुलि कलुष नसावन ॥ १० ॥

rāmacaritamānasa muni bhāvana. biracē'u sambhu suhāvana pāvana. 9.
tribidha dōṣa dukha dārida dāvana. kali kucāli kuli kaluṣa nasāvana. 10.

Ram Charit Manas delights sages, seers and saintly souls; they are very fond of it. It is beautiful, holy and divine, and it was created or conceived (first) by Lord Shambhu (Shiva) himself¹. (9)

This story destroys or eliminates all the three types of faults, sorrows and poverty that torment a creature in this world². It helps one to defeat all the dirty tricks played by Kaliyug³, as well as neutralise the evil effects and tainting influences of sins, vices and misdemeanours. (10)

[¹Lord Shiva is an embodiment of all the spiritual virtues that are deemed to be excellent, auspicious, holy, divine, immaculate and redeeming for the soul of a creature. To wit, Shiva is beautiful, holy and divine himself. So the story of Lord Ram that sprouted in the soil of Shiva's inner-self that has these eclectic qualities as outlined above also acquired these qualities much in the same way as a flower derives its nourishment from the soil in which it grows.

Thus, the story of Ram Charit Manas is absolutely holy, divine, auspicious and spiritually redeeming like Lord Shiva who had conceived it. It is like a beautiful lotus flower that blooms in a lake of crystal clear nectar.

²These refer to errors one makes in relation to one's deeds, thoughts and words. The sorrows that torment a creature relate to his birth, old age and death. And the other things from which a creature suffers in this world are lack of resources, poverty, and dearth of opportunities to rise and attain success in one's endeavours.

³The dirty tricks of Kaliyug cause immense delusions, temptations, passions, lust, desires, attachments, infatuations, ego, haughtiness, arrogance, anger, jealousy, ill-will, malice, hatred, enmity, and so on and so forth. These negative things set in motion a train of problems for a creature. All these seemingly insurmountable problems can be easily overcome by listening to the holy story of Lord Ram as it ignites the hidden spark of spiritualism in the creature that gives him the taste of bliss and beatitude that would motivate him to forgo other superficial forms of tastes represented by the artificial comforts and pleasures of this material world of sense objects.]

रचि महेस निज मानस राखा । पाइ सुसमउ सिवा सन भाषा ॥ ११ ॥

तातें रामचरितमानस बर । धरेउ नाम हियँ हेरि हरषि हर ॥ १२ ॥

raci mahēsa nija mānasa rākhā. pā'i susama'u sivā sana bhāṣā. 11.

tātēṁ rāmacaritamānasa bara. dharē'u nāma hiyaṁ hēri haraṣi hara. 12.

Lord Mahesh (the Great Ish or the Great Lord God) had created (conceived) it (the story of Lord Ram known as the Ramayan) and kept it enshrined in his Mana (mind and heart).

When the proper time came, he had narrated it to his consort 'Siva' (who is also known as goddess Uma or Parvati)¹. (11)

This is the reason why this story is called Ram Charit Manas—for it was conceived (or viewed; visualised) by Lord Har (Shiva) in his Mana². He loved and adored its beauty and spiritual value exceedingly, and so he reverentially and with due affection and devotion enshrined it in his heart. (12)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 105—to Doha no. 120.

²This story of the Ramayan is called "Ram Charit Manas" as it describes the life and times as well as the deeds done by Lord Ram, the Supreme Being who had manifested himself as a human being on earth for the welfare of the gods as well as other creatures, as it was conceived in the 'Mana', or the heart and mind, of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva always remains submerged in meditation, reflection and contemplation; he repeats the holy name of Lord Ram, viz. "RAM", as his preferred Mantra (spiritual formula), and he treats Lord Ram as his revered deity to whom he offers all his worship and obeisance.

So during these meditative sessions this story revealed in his heart and mind, he was ecstatic with bliss and entered into a state of Samadhi, a transcendental state of the consciousness that appears to be like a state of trance to the outside world, and in which he lost awareness of everything else. He loved it so much that he carefully etched this story right inside his own heart and mind like one would consecrate a deity in a shrine.

Like one dips in a lake of cool and clean water to calm and sooth one's self and would prefer to remain in the lake as long as possible, Lord Shiva was so excited with this revelation and its attendant bliss and beatitude that he too found exceptional solace in remaining perpetually submerged in remembering this divine and holy story and repeating it within himself.]

कहउँ कथा सोइ सुखद सुहाई । सादर सुनहु सुजन मन लाई ॥ १३ ॥

kaha'um^o kathā sō'i sukhada suhā'ī. sādara sunahu sujana mana lā'ī. 13.

I (Tulsidas) shall tell the same story that is charming and pleasant, and gives joy and happiness (to both the narrator and the listener). All those who are good, virtuous and pious souls should hear it attentively (because it for their own good and welfare) (13)

दो०. जस मानस जेहि बिधि भयउ जग प्रचार जेहि हेतु ।

अब सोइ कहउँ प्रसंग सब सुमिरि उमा बृषकेतु ॥ ३५ ॥

dōhā.

jasa mānasa jēhi bidhi bhaya'u jaga pracāra jēhi hētu.
aba sō'i kaha'um̐ prasaṅga saba sumiri umā br̥ṣakētu. 35.

I shall now proceed to give a full account and describe what Ram Charit Manas is all about, what are its qualities, importance and values, how it came into existence, and how and for what reasons it spread in this world.

I shall now commence doing it after first invoking Lord Shiva who has a bull on his flag (“br̥ṣakētu”; the flag that has an emblem of a bull; Lord Shiva’s insignia), and his divine consort goddess Uma¹. (Doha no. 35)

[¹It is absolutely essential and obligatory to pay respects to Lord Shiva and seek his blessings because he is the one who had first conceived this holy and divine story. Had it not been for him, we would have not heard of it, and so the world would have not been able to access this eternal lake of spiritual bliss and peace.

Another reason why Tulsidas pays his respects to Lord Shiva is given in Chaupai line no. 1 herein below.

Then again, it is equally important to pay my homage to goddess Uma because it was due to her enquiry and insistence that Lord Shiva revealed this story of Lord Ram for the first time, as hitherto he had kept it secret and enshrined in his own Mana.]

चौ०. संभु प्रसाद सुमति हियँ हुलसी । रामचरितमानस कबि तुलसी ॥ १ ॥
करइ मनोहर मति अनुहारी । सुजन सुचित सुनि लेहु सुधारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sambhu prasāda sumati hiyaṁ̐ hulasī. rāmacaritamānasa kabi tulasī. 1.
kara'i manōhara mati anuhārī. sujana sucita suni lēhu sudhārī. 2.

It is due to the grace and blessings of Lord Shiva that this divine, holy and sacred story of Ram Charit Manas sprouted and developed in its full bloom in the heart of Tulsidas. This enabled him (Tulsidas) to become a narrator or recitor of this wonderful story. (1)

To the best of his (Tulsidas’) ability he would try to make it (i.e. narrate or recite or describe it) in the most beautiful way he can, but at the same time he requests one and all who listen to it to improve upon it and make it more attractive and valuable as much as they can¹. (2)

[¹And so true was his request and prediction. Today we find so many preachers and teachers and readers of this single book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ that one can’t keep count. Each of these teachers and preachers has presented it in his own unique way; each of them has interpreted the verses and their meanings in their own way; each reader understands and derives pleasure from this book in his or her own way.

Though there are many other versions of the Ramayan, this variety and flexibility is missing from all of them.]

(vi) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 34:-

चौ०. कीन्हि प्रस्न जेहि भाँति भवानी । जेहि बिधि संकर कहा बखानी ॥ १ ॥
सो सब हेतु कहब मैं गाई । कथाप्रबंध बिचित्र बनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kīnhi prasna jēhi bhām̐ti bhavānī. jēhi bidhi saṅkara kahā bakhānī. 1.
sō saba hētu kahaba main̐ gāī. kathāprabandha bicitra banāī. 2.

I shall now describe how Bhavaani (i.e. Uma, the consort of Shiva) had questioned Lord Shiva and prevailed upon him to tell her this story, and how the Lord answered her queries in detail as a result of which this story (of Ram Charit Manas) was narrated by him. (1)

I shall endeavour to narrate everything pertaining to the question as to how and why this wonderful story came to be revealed. For this purpose I shall tell this strange story by weaving it in pleasant words and embellishing it with mysterious events and circumstances. (2)

जेहिं यह कथा सुनी नहिं होई । जनि आचरजु करै सुनि सोई ॥ ३ ॥
कथा अलौकिक सुनहिं जे ग्यानी । नहिं आचरजु करहिं अस जानी ॥ ४ ॥

jēhiṁ yaha kathā sunī nahīṁ hōī. jani ācaraju karai suni sōī. 3.
kathā alaukika sunahīṁ jē gyānī. nahīṁ ācaraju karahīṁ asa jānī. 4.

Let anyone who has not heard this story before not be surprised and get perplexed by its mysteries and strange anecdotes. (3)

Those who are wise, enlightened, learned and realised (gyānī), i.e. those who are aware of who Lord Ram was and know the mystical and maverick ways of the Lord, they won't be surprised by it. It is because they would realise that – (4).

रामकथा कै मिति जग नाहीं । असि प्रतीति तिन्ह के मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥
नाना भाँति राम अवतारा । रामायन सत कोटि अपारा ॥ ६ ॥

rāmakathā kai miti jaga nāhīṁ. asi pratīti tinha kē mana māhīṁ. 5.
nānā bhām̐ti rāma avatārā. rāmāyana sata kōṭi apārā. 6.

--- They believe that the divine and legendary story of Lord Ram has no end in this world—i.e. there are infinite ways it is told and re-told; there are myriad versions of it in this world. [Since they are aware that Lord Ram's story has countless versions that have been adopted by different cultures and civilisations, and therefore it had to be

adapted to suit them, those who are wise and learned won't feel astonished when they hear my version of the story of Lord Ram.]¹ (5)

Lord Ram has manifested himself in this world during different times and for different reasons. And therefore, the story of Ramayan that describes the life, time and deeds of Lord Ram would logically be as many and varied as the times the Lord manifested himself in this world for various reasons². (6)

[¹Therefore, such wise men would also not be surprised to read and hear about the 'Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan' that appears in the Uttar Kand of this book Ram Charit Manas. They won't frown at and fret about this holy and divine story being narrated by even a humble creature such as a 'crow', which was the physical form of sage Kaagbhusund.

²Lord Shiva himself has reiterated this fact to Uma in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124.

So Tulsidas is merely repeating what Shiva has said.]

कलपभेद हरिचरित सुहाए । भाँति अनेक मुनीसन्ह गाए ॥ ७ ॥
करिअ न संसय अस उर आनी । सुनिअ कथा सादर रति मानी ॥ ८ ॥

kalapabhēda haricarita suhā'ē. bhām̐ti anēka munīsanha gā'ē. 7.
kari'a na sansaya asa ura ānī. suni'a kathā sādara rati mānī. 8.

The beautiful and pleasing story of Lord Ram differs according to the era and circumstances in which he had manifested himself. All these different stories have been recited (sung; narrated) by countless sages and seers over time. (7)

Therefore, one should not cloud his heart and mind with doubts (as it would rob him of the pleasure and joy derived by hearing the wonderful story). Instead, one should respect it and listen to it with devotion, faith and reverence. (8)

दो०. राम अनंत अनंत गुन अमित कथा बिस्तार ।
सुनि आचरजु न मानिहहिं जिन्ह कें बिमल बिचार ॥ ३३ ॥

dōhā.

rāma ananta ananta guna amita kathā bistāra.
suni ācaraju na mānihahim̐ jinha kēm̐ bimala bicāra. 33.

Indeed and without gainsay, I reiterate once again that Lord Ram is eternal and infinite are his virtues. Likewise, the Lord's stories too are countless and varied, and they spread over eras and generations.

Those who are wise, those whose intellect is free from corruption, and those who have purity in their thought, they should not express surprise at this story and its variety. (Doha no. 33)

चौ०. एहि बिधि सब संसय करि दूरी । सिर धरि गुर पद पंकज धूरी ॥ १ ॥
पुनि सबही बिनवउँ कर जोरी । करत कथा जेहिं लाग न खोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi saba sansaya kari dūrī. sira dhari gura pada paṅkaja dhūrī. 1.
puni sabahī binava'um̐ kara jōrī. karata kathā jēhiṁ lāga na khōrī. 2.

[Tuslidas says—] In this way, after removing all causes of doubts and confusions (pertaining to the story of Lord Ram), I put the dust of my Guru (teacher and preceptor) on my head (as a mark of respect to him) (before I commence narrating the story of Lord Ram). (1)

I once again bow my head and pray to all by joining my palms in supplication so that no blame can come to me (for any errors I may inadvertently make) or be imposed on the narration of this divine story (for any of the shortcomings or deficiencies that may creep into it unintentionally). (2)

सादर सिवहि नाइ अब माथा । बरनउँ बिसद राम गुन गाथा ॥ ३ ॥

sādara sivahi nā'i aba māthā. barana'um̐ bisada rāma guna gāthā. 3.

Now finally, I bow my head reverentially to Lord Shiva and commence the narration of the elaborate story of Lord Ram that describes the Lord's excellent virtues and qualities. (3)

(vii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 44—to Doha no. 47:-

चौ०. भरद्वाज मुनि बसहिं प्रयागा । तिन्हहि राम पद अति अनुरागा ॥ १ ॥
तापस सम दम दया निधाना । परमारथ पथ परम सुजाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bharadvāja muni basahiṁ prayāgā. tinhahi rāma pada ati anurāgā. 1.
tāpasa sama dama dayā nidhānā. paramāratha patha parama sujānā. 2.

Sage Bharadvaj¹ lived in Prayag² and he had immense affection (and devotion) for the holy feet of Lord Ram. (1)

[Now his qualities or virtues are listed.] He was steeped in Tapa (observed austerities and did penance), practiced the eclectic spiritual qualities of composure of mind and evenness or stability of thought, self-restraint over the sense organs of perception and action, and was an embodiment of the virtues of compassion and mercy. He was a wise and enlightened traveler on the path of liberation and deliverance, and had all the excellent qualities that one ought to possess³. (2)

[¹A brief life-sketch of sage Bharadwaj is appended as a note of Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45 herein below.

²Prayag is a holy pilgrim place that has the confluence of three holy rivers, viz. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati. Its present-day name is Allahabad, and it is situated in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India.

The glory of Prayag has been eulogized in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

³Lord Ram had visited sage Bharadwaj during his journey into the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109.

Later on, Bharat, Lord Ram's younger brother, too had visited the sage when he was on his way to search Lord Ram in the forest and try to bring him back to Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 216.]

माघ मकरगत रबि जब होई । तीरथपतिहिं आव सब कोई ॥ ३ ॥
देव दनुज किंनर नर श्रेनीं । सादर मज्जहिं सकल त्रिबेनीं ॥ ४ ॥

māgha makaragata rabi jaba hōī. tīrathapatihiṁ āva saba kōī. 3.
dēva danuja kinnara nara śrēnīṁ. sādara majjahīṁ sakala tribēnīṁ. 4.

In the Hindu month of Magha when the sun enters the sign of Capricorn, everyone (i.e. sages and seers as well as ordinary people) visit the holiest of holy places (i.e. Prayag). (3)

The Gods, the Demons, the Kinnars (celestial dancers and singers), and all classes of human beings come to Prayag and reverentially take a purifying bath in the Triveni (literally meaning the confluence of three holy rivers—Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati)¹. (4)

[¹All these three rivers are holy in their own right. So by taking a dip at a place where the three meet gives a three-fold religious merit to the bather.]

पूजहिं माधव पद जलजाता । परसि अखय बटु हरषहिं गाता ॥ ५ ॥
भरद्वाज आश्रम अति पावन । परम रज्ज मुनिबर मन भावन ॥ ६ ॥

pūjahīṁ mādharma pada jalajātā. parasi akhaya baṭu haraṣahīṁ gātā. 5.
bharadvāja āśrama ati pāvana. param ramya munibara mana bhāvana. 6.

While going through the rituals, the visitors and pilgrims worship the holy feet of Lord Veni-Madhav (a form of Lord Vishnu who is the patron and presiding deity of this particular religious place called Triveni), and they feel blessed and thrilled in their bodies by touching the sacred tree of immortality known as 'Akshaya Vat'. (5)

The hermitage of sage Bharadwaj is located here. It is holy and pure (i.e. it has a holy atmosphere around it that is conducive to spiritual pursuits), and exceedingly charming and attractive so much so that it appeals to the hearts of great sages and seers who go there. (6)

तहाँ होइ मुनि रिषय समाजा । जाहिं जे मज्जन तीरथराजा ॥ ७ ॥
मज्जहिं प्रात समेत उछाहा । कहहिं परसपर हरि गुन गाहा ॥ ८ ॥

tahām̐ hō'i muni riṣaya samājā. jāhiṁ jē majjana tīratharājā. 7.
majjahim̐ prāta samēta uchāhā. kahahim̐ parasapara hari guna gāhā. 8.

All the great sages, seers, hermits and other pious people who go to bathe in the holy rivers of Prayag, which is like a King among holy places, stay in large numbers in the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj (who cheerfully hosts them all). (7)

These groups of holy men enthusiastically take a dip in the rivers in the early morning, and thereafter they spend their time discussing the countless glories of the Lord God and talking about him. (8)

दो०. ब्रह्म निरूपन धरम बिधि बरनहिं तत्त्व बिभाग ।
कहहिं भगति भगवंत कै संजुत ग्यान बिराग ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

brahma nirūpana dharama bidhi baranahim̐ tattva bibhāga.
kahahim̐ bhagati bhagavanta kai sanjuta gyāna birāga. 44.

These holy men discuss about the nature and truth of Brahm (the pure cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Being), about the various aspects of Dharma (laws that govern righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct and thought in life), and the finer nuances of the different principles of metaphysics.

They discuss and expound upon the various aspects of Bhakti (devotion) for Lord God in conjunction with the virtues of Gyan and Vairagya (spiritual wisdom and renunciation respectively) that are associated with it. [To wit, they discuss how Bhakti is related to Gyan and Vairagya, and how the latter leads one to the former.] (Doha no. 44)

चौ०. एहि प्रकार भरि माघ नहाहीं । पुनि सब निज निज आश्रम जाहीं ॥ १ ॥
प्रति संबत अति होइ अनंदा । मकर मज्जि गवनहिं मुनिबृन्दा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi prakāra bhari māgha nahāhīm̐. puni saba nija nija āśrama jāhīm̐. 1.
prati sambata ati hō'i anandā. makara majji gavanahim̐ munibr̥ndā. 2.

In this way it was a usual practice that all great souls took religious baths during the whole month of Magha, and then they went back to their respective hermitages. (1)

Every year there was great rejoicing when the time came for this assembly, and every year the assembled sages and seers and other holy men went back to their places after bathing in the holy rivers while the sun stayed in the asterism of Capricorn. (2)

एक बार भरि मकर नहाए । सब मुनीस आश्रमन्ह सिधाए ॥ ३ ॥
जागबलिक मुनि परम बिबेकी । भरद्वाज राखे पद टेकी ॥ ४ ॥

ēka bāra bhari makara nahā'ē. saba munīsa āśramanha sidhā'ē. 3.
jāgabalika muni parama bibēkī. bharadvāja rākhē pada ṭēkī. 4.

[Once upon a time as was usual, all the sages and seers had assembled at Prayag, a place where three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, have their confluence. They used to come here every year on the auspicious occasion of “Makar Sakranti”¹. They stayed at the place for the whole month, and on the final day took a bath at the confluence of the rivers before heading back to their respective hermitages.

However, on one such occasion, sage Bharadvaj, who lived permanently at Prayag, requested sage Yagyavalkya³, one of the greatest sage and seer of his time, to stay back for some more days and enlighten him about the secrets of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. It was during this long and elaborate discourse that unfolded now that sage Yagyavalkya narrates the story of Lord Shiva’s marriage.]

Once upon a time, all the sages and seers who had performed religious rites during the entire holy month of ‘Makar (Sakranti)’, including taking purification baths and doing other rituals daily, did their ablutions on the final day of the month and then cheerfully went away to their respective hermitages. (3)

Sage Yagyavalkya was one amongst them. He was a very wise, learned and enlightened seer. Sage Bharadvaj (who used to live permanently at the place where the sages and seers assembled to spend the holy month of Makar, a place known as Prayag), fell at the feet of Yagyavalkya and earnestly requested him to stay back for some more time. (4)

[Note—¹Makar Sakranti—The tenth sign of the zodiac known as Capricorn is called “Makar”, and the word “Sarkanti” means a union, the solstice, a planet’s transition from one zodiac to another. In the context of Hindu religious practices, “Makar Sakranti” is the transition of the sun into the tenth zodiac sign of Capricorn. It falls roughly on the 14th of January of each year. It is also known as “Uttaraayan” as the sun moves in the northern direction.

Since “Makar” coincides with the eleventh month of the Hindu lunar year known as “Maagha”, both “Makar” and “Maagha” are commonly used as synonyms.

During this whole month, it is regarded auspicious to take a dip in holy rivers. Since three great rivers, i.e. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati, have their ‘union’ or confluence at Prayaag (also known as Allahabad in modern India), it is the place deemed most suitable for performing religious rites as the benefits are symbolically multiplied three times due to the confluence of three rivers here.

A great congregation of sages and seers is held every year during this period when they take holy dip in the rivers, perform various rites and hold discourses—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.

²Sage Bharadwaj—He is regarded as one of the seven celestial sages known as Sapta Rishis. Ironically, we find many ancient sages with this name, and therefore it is clear that this word was used more as a surname or title rather than the name of an individual sage or seer. Bharadwaj is regarded as a Vedic sage after whom a lineage of sages and seers of the highest order was established. His disciples assumed their teacher's name as their title, and came to be known as Bharadwajs.

Sage Bharadwaj Baarhasptya is the seer of several hymns of the Rig Veda, Mandal no. 6. He is the son of Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of the Gods. He was the father of Dronacharya of the Mahabharata who has taught Arjun the science of archery.

The epic story of the life and times of Lord Ram that was written by the legendary poet Goswami Tulsidas, the book titled “Ram Charit Manas”, mentions sage Bharadwaj. He lived in Prayag, the confluence of three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44.

The story of Ram Charit Manas was unveiled as a discourse between sage Bharadwaj and sage Yagyavalkya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.

Later on in the narration of Ram Charit Manas we read that Lord Ram had visited the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj during his forest sojourn—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109.

Sage Bharadwaj is credited with two great works—viz. Bharadwaj Shrauta-Sutras consisting of ten sections, and Bharadwaj Griha-Sutras.

The profound philosophy pertaining to the divine nature of Lord Ram and him being the Tarak Brahm himself personified is preached to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyavalkya in Ram Uttar Tapini Upnishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto nos. 2-3.

In addition to this, the story of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati was narrated to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyavalkya in Ram Charit Manas—refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104.

³Sage Yagyavalkya/Yagyavalkya—He belonged to that Vedic period when people had an integral and holistic view of life and the reality behind existence, and all activities, secular or religious, were regarded as one big, wholesome and composite religious sacrifice called a Yagya. Life itself was consecrated and devoted to the realization of the transcendental and supreme truthful Reality. There was no distinction between renunciation and involvement in life's chores. There was no dichotomy between the two, and the various debates arising in Indian spiritual practices due to different interpretations and re-interpretations of the Vedic and Upanishadic tenets was a product of the later period. One such exemplary sage and seer belonging to that golden period was Yagyavalkya—he was an enlightened wise man who was not only a self-realised householder but an ardent ascetic, an acclaimed scholar and an exemplary renunciate man par-excellence, all at the same time.

It is believed that Yagyavalkya was an incarnation of Lord Brahma, the creator, when he was cursed by Lord Shiva. [Skand Puran, Nagar Khand, 1-9.] His father was named Brahmabahu (literally, the limbs of Brahma, because the latter's limbs had manifested as this person). [Vayu Puran, 61.] But according to a book of religious law written by Yagyavalkya himself known as 'Yagyavalkya Sanhita', his father also had the same name. So, our Yagyavalkya was, in effect, 'Yagyavalkya, the second'. [Yagyavalkya Sanhita, 1.]

Yagyavalkya's teacher in the science of Yoga (meditation) and the knowledge of the self (metaphysics and philosophy) was sage Vasistha, son of Hiranyanabha Kaushalya, a king of the Raghu dynasty which ruled Ayodhya in ancient times. [Vayu Puran, 88; Bhagwat Mahapurana, 93/106.] The sage performed severe penances and austerities, known as Tapa, at Mithila, the birth place of Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram. [Skandpuran, Reva Khand, 42.]

He used to attend the court of great ancient wise kings, such as king Janak (the father of Sita—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, canto 3-4) and Yudhisthir (of the Mahabharat fame—Mahabharat, Sabha Parva, 4/32). It was in the court of king Janak that Yagyavalkya had defeated all the assembled scholars of the time on various metaphysical and theological concepts. He is also believed to be a chief priest in Yudhisthir's Rajsu Yagya.

Sage Yagyavalkya was one of the greatest, most erudite, wise and renowned seers of his time. He was a senior and enlightened man, so wise and learned a scholar that even king Janak, who himself was a most self-realised and enlightened king of his era, was so much bowled over by his erudition, depth of knowledge and scholarship that he accepted the sage's discipleship (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse nos. 1, 4). He was proclaimed the undisputed champion and winner in a metaphysical and theological debate held in the court of Janak during the course of a great fire sacrifice held where great scholars, seers and sages from far and wide had assembled (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 1-9).

He was a much sought after teacher and an honoured exponent of the eclectic Advaita Vedanta philosophy of non-duality. This basically propounds, inter alia, that everything in existence, visible or invisible, minute or colossal, important or unimportant, are all fundamentally the same singular unit called Brahm manifested in myriad and diverse ways, that therefore nothing that exists which is not Brahm is not true, that this Brahm is the only supreme Authority and Divinity in the entire creation, that this Brahm and the individual Atma or pure consciousness of the creature are one and the same, and not two independent units, that this Atma is the pure self, etc. Anything contrary to this is false and fallacious.

It is believed that all major Upanishads belonging to the Yajur Veda tradition are either directly or indirectly expounded and enunciated by and elucidated upon by Yagyavalkya or any one of his long line of disciples who had acquired this eclectic knowledge from him. (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/6/1-3, 4/6/1-3 and 6/5/1-3.)

One such example is the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition in which sage Yagyavalkya has taught even the teacher of the Gods, i.e. Brihaspati, about the esoteric secrets and the profound spiritual importance as well as the significance of the Tarak Mantra, and about the divine nature of Lord Ram and his great Mantras that can provide a creature with Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance) once and for all.

The high spiritual prowess and reach of Yagyavalkya can be judged from the fact that he could communicate directly with the Supreme Being called Mandal

Purush in his visible manifestation as the brilliant and splendorous Sun as described in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The fact that Yagyavalkya had a repeated communion with the Sun God, at least on four occasion is clearly marked out in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1/1-2; 2/1/1-2; 3/1/1-2; 4/1/1-2.

Yagyavalkya was a rich householder sage and seer. This is borne out by the fact that (a) on each occasion when he attended great debates he was showered with huge largesse by king Janak in the form of immense quantity of gold and thousands cows (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/1/1-2, 4/1/1-7, 4/3/33, 4/4/23), and (b) when he asks his wife Maitreyi to partition his vase estate before he went on to take Sanyas (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/4/1-2, 4/5/1-2).

The creation of Yajur Veda's two branches:- The word 'Yajus' means a liturgy of hymns chanted during the fire sacrifice. The Yajur Veda has been classified into Krishna and Shukla branches. It would be pertinent and interesting to add a brief note here on why the Yajur Veda has come to be known as Krishna and Shukla, meaning 'black' and 'white' respectively. The Yajur Veda Sanhita (a collection of Mantras or hymns) is classified into these two types for a variety of reasons. One of the probable reasons for this Yajur Veda having two names is that the collection in the Sanhita that came to be known as 'Krishna' had a mixture of prose and poetry, and hence considered 'impure and corrupted'. This is because primarily the Vedas were composed in poetry form with the verses structured according to one or the other methods of poetical composition called 'Chandas'. Prose as style of composition came later on and was regarded as an interpolation, interposition or juxtaposition which is all tantamount to corrupting the original method. Hence, that text which had both the poetry and prose was deemed to be 'corrupted and impure form of the Vedic text', and therefore called 'Krishna'—the dark one. On the other hand, the Sanhita which had only poetry was considered un-adulterated and pure form of the Vedic text, and hence called 'Shukla' or the white one, the colour 'white' being the colour of purity, immaculacy, divinity and holiness.

Since the primary use of the hymns of the Vedas in earlier times was for incantatory chanting during religious fire sacrifices, the poetical mode of composition was more suitable than the prose model. That is why these hymns were composed in 'Chandas' which are the different styles in which Sanskrit verses are composed. Later on, when these verses were also being used for purposes other than the fire sacrifices, the prose model evolved and developed. The Upanishads are mainly in the prose model because they are philosophical treatises and not ritualistic incantatory chanting.

Another plausible reason is that the verses of the Krishna Yajur Veda are more difficult to understand than those of the Shukla Yajur Veda. Hence, the former were called 'dark' or Krishna because of the difficulty in their comprehension and explanation as compared to the more easier ones classified as 'white' or Shukla. The Krishna Yajur Veda Sanhita was more prevalent in the south of India while the Shukla was more common in the north of the country.

The third reason is that the original classifier of Vedas was 'Krishna Dvaipaayana Veda Vyas' who taught the text of the Yajur Veda to his disciple called Vaishampaayana. Hence, the original version of the text was named 'Krishna' in order to commemorate this fact.

There is a fourth probable reason as outlined here. The chief exponent of the Yajur Veda is regarded as the ancient sage Yagyavalkya. He was one of the several disciples of sage Vaishampayana. Once the teacher asked his disciples to perform the 'Brahmavadhya' sacrifice (a type of elaborate penance) for him. Yagyavalkya was so

confident of himself, his knowledge and competency that he offered to do it all by himself for his teacher. The teacher thought that he was haughty and boastful. So, disowning or disinheriting him from his line of disciples, he commanded that Yagyavalkya should return all that he had learnt from his teacher. The sage returned all the Mantras of the Yajur Veda that he had learnt from his teacher by ‘vomiting’ them out. The rest of the disciples were very cunning; they transformed themselves immediately into partridges, called Tittars, and gobbled up everything. From that developed the Krishna Yajur Veda’s Taitirriya branch. It is called ‘Krishna’ after the teacher and ‘Taitirriya’ after the partridges. Also, since they were ‘vomited products’ they were regarded as polluted and impure. Such body of knowledge came to be known as ‘Krishna’—the impure one.

Now, not to be demoralized so easily and determined to get back his lost knowledge and wisdom, Yagyavalkya worshipped the Sun God who blessed him with a fresh set of Mantras of the Yajur Veda. Since it came from a ‘bright source’ represented by the sun, this set of Mantras was called the ‘Shukla Yajur Veda’. [The word ‘Shukla’ means ‘bright or light or illuminated’.] The sage revised this into fifteen sub-texts, called the Vaaj-sanei, i.e. those belonging to the horse race. This is because the Sun God had assumed the form of a ‘horse’ to teach him, and the word ‘Vaajis’ means a horse. The teaching was done in the form of the cosmic neighing. This form of the Sun God came to be worshipped as ‘Hayagriva’, the Lord with the neck of a horse. An entire Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is named after this God, and it is called ‘Hayagriva Upanishad’. It is the 29th Upanishad of this Veda.

Yagyavalkya had fifteen disciples (e.g. Kaanva, Maadhyandin etc.) who mastered one each of these fifteen sub-text created by Yagyavalkya. [Vishnu Puran, 3-5; Vayu Puran, 60-1.] The list of sages and seers who excelled in the Shukla Yajur Veda branch has been given in Brihad-Aaranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 6, and Canto 4, Brahmin 6.

The Yajur Veda is divided into two major types—viz. the Shukla (white) and Krishna (black or dark). The Krishna Yajur Veda has only four branches existing at present out of the earlier eighty-five—Taitirriya, Maitraayani, Katha, and Kapisthal. Its Brahman is known as Taitirriya Brahman. The Shukla Yajur Veda, also known as the Vaajsaneyi Sanhita, originally had seventeen branches, but now only following two branches exist—Kaanva and Maadhyandeen. Its Brahman is known as Shatpath Brahman.

The sub-Veda of the Yajur Veda is known as Dhanur-Veda which deals with the science of archery and warfare.

The Aaranyakas of the Yajur Veda are—Taitirriya (of the Krishna Yajur Veda) and Brihad-aaranyak (of the Shukla Yajur Veda).

There are 19 principal Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda, and 32 principal Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda—such as Taitirriya, Swetaasvatar, Katha, Brihdaaranakya, Maitri, Ishavasya Upanishads etc.

The priests who used the hymns of the Yajur Veda during fire sacrifices were called ‘Yajus’ or ‘Adhwaryu’.

Family—He had two wives. The elder was named Katayani, and the second was called Maitreyi. From the elder wife, he had a son named Katyanana. [Skandpuran, Nagar Khand, 130; Brihad Aranya Upanishad, 4/5/1.] According to ‘Yogi Yagyavalkya’, a hand book on Yoga, his third wife was Gargi, though she is depicted as a rival interviewer who tested the sage’s erudition and scholarship in Brihad

Aranyaka Upanishad. [Yogi Yagyavalkya, edited by Upendranath, Vasumati—Calcutta, 1-5.]

Sanyas—Though Yagyavalkya was externally a householder sage and seer, he was internally (i.e. mentally; intellectually and emotionally) a highly self-realised and an exceptionally enlightened man, a sincere ascetic and a renunciate monk who knew the futility of worldly pursuits. He was not preaching what he did not believe in. So he finally took to the eclectic path of Sanyas as clearly mentioned in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/5/15.

Works—Yagyavalkya wrote great texts on Yoga, metaphysics and law pertaining to daily life, much like Manu's Smiriti Law. (i) Yagyavalkya Sanhita contains religious laws; (ii) Yog Sanhita was composed in the hermitage of sage Upmanyu [Kurma Puran, 25.]; and (iii) Yogi Yagyavalkya on Yoga philosophy.

Yagyavalkya was a great and acclaimed Yogi (an ascetic) as well as a philosopher and a preacher par-excellence in the field of metaphysics, one who was well-versed in the knowledge of Brahm and the Atma.]

सादर चरन सरोज पखारे । अति पुनीत आसन बैठारे ॥ ५ ॥

करि पूजा मुनि सुजसु बखानी । बोले अति पुनीत मृदु बानी ॥ ६ ॥

sādara carana sarōja pakhārē. ati punīta āsana baiṭhārē. 5.

kari pūjā muni sujasu bakhānī. bōlē ati punīta mṛdu bānī. 6.

Sage Bharadwaj reverentially washed the feet of sage Yagyavalkya and seated him respectfully on a very clean seating-mat. (5)

Then after duly worshipping the great sage, praising his glories and reputation as a wise, learned and enlightened sage, he (Bharadwaj) said most politely and in a reverentially tone¹—(6)

[Note—¹When a person wants to learn anything and is sincere about it, he is very polite and humble while approaching the teacher for knowledge and removal of doubts. The teacher whom he approaches for an answer is a wise man, and so he senses the seekers earnestness. A good teacher cannot refuse, but feels that it is his moral duty to enlighten the other person and impart the knowledge he seeks. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 48.

The same thing has happened when Uma, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, approached the Lord to remove certain doubts she had in her mind regarding the divinity of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 111.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 64 where we learn that it was on the most polite and humble request of Garud, the celestial eagle which is the mount of Lord Vishnu, that the crow-saint Kaagbhusund narrated the story of Lord Ram for his benefit.

Earlier, Garud had bowed his head before Lord Shiva and had very politely asked him to remove his doubts about the divine reality of Lord Ram, but the Lord sent him to Kaagbhusund because a bird would better understand the language of

another bird—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 61; (b) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 62.]

नाथ एक संसु बड़ मोरें । करगत बेदतत्व सबु तोरें ॥ ७ ॥

कहत सो मोहि लागत भय लाजा । जौं न कहउँ बड़ होइ अकाजा ॥ ८ ॥

nātha ēka sansa'u barā mōrēm̐. karagata bēdatattva sabu tōrēm̐. 7.

kahata sō mōhi lāgata bhaya lājā. jaur̐m̐ na kaha'um̐ barā hō'i akājā. 8.

‘Oh Lord! I have a grave doubt which perplexes me¹, and I know that you are well-versed in all the essential knowledge of the Vedas (scriptures). [Hence, by inference, you are the most suitable seer who can remove my doubts and explain the reality to me. That is why I have approached you, and request you to please be kind to enlighten me.] (7)

I am afraid (or ashamed and feeling shy) to divulge my ignorance (or lack of knowledge)² and ask you to remove my doubts (as it may annoy you that being a great sage myself how come I harboured such ridiculous doubts in my mind; it would seem incongruous to you). But at the same time if I don't say anything about my doubts and confusions, it would be very harmful for me (as it will rob me of my mental and spiritual peace, and cast a dark shadow on my wisdom and my ability to preach others). (8)

[Note—¹The reason for having any doubt is ignorance; it eclipses the wisdom of even great sages and seers. Ignorance does not even spare the Creator from being deluded. These things are clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 1, 5-7 that precede Doha no. 59; (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60; (c) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 62.

Lack of wisdom and prevalence of ignorance creates a lot of heartburn, doubts and irrational thoughts—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 58; (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 59.

²As for being afraid to ask someone who is very senior and exalted a question which seems ridiculous because its answer is very obvious and is unexpected from a person who is otherwise regarded knowledgeable and wise, we have other instances in Ram Charit Manas where the person wanting some of his doubts removed is afraid to ask questions out of hesitation. For instance, in Ram Charit Manas we shall read that even Bharat, the dear brother of Lord Ram, had felt hesitant and afraid to ask the Lord about the characteristic features of saints—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 37. This obviously is because Bharat was supposed to know the qualities of saints, and his wanting to know about them seemed incongruous on the face of it.]

दो०. संत कहहिं असि नीति प्रभु श्रुति पुरान मुनि गाव ।

होइ न बिमल बिबेक उर गुर सन किएँ दुराव ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

santa kahahim̐ asi nīti prabhu śruti purāna muni gāva.
hō'i na bimala bibēka ura gura sana ki'ēm̐ durāva. 45.

Oh Lord! It is proclaimed by saints and also declared by the scriptures such as the Vedas and Purans that true and pure form of wisdom cannot be expected in the heart of someone who conceals his ignorance from his guru (teacher). [And that is why I have gathered courage to express my lack of knowledge to you so that true and pure form of wisdom can sprout in my inner-self, and I can become enlightened.] (Doha no. 45)

[Note—Sage Bharadwaj wishes to be enlightened about the divinity of Lord Ram, and unless one has pure form of wisdom firmly established in his heart, this knowledge would elude him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 122.

Without proper wisdom no one can expect to cross over this huge ocean-like world and find liberation and deliverance from its horrors—refer also to Vinai Patrika of Tulsidas, (a) verse no. 115, line no. 2 of stanza no. 5; and (b) verse no. 123.]

चौ०. अस बिचारि प्रगटउँ निज मोहू । हरहु नाथ करि जन पर छोहू ॥ १ ॥
राम नाम कर अमित प्रभावा । संत पुरान उपनिषद गावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa bicāri pragaṭa'um̐ nija mōhū. harahu nātha kari jana para chōhū. 1.
rāma nāma kara amita prabhāvā. santa purāna upaniṣada gāvā. 2.

Considering all the aforesaid facts I have decided to reveal my ignorance. Oh Lord, please be kind to remove it, please dispel my doubts and fears by enlightening me about the truth and reality, and be kind to be gracious upon me as I am your follower (or your disciple) (1)

That the holy name of Lord Ram has astounding and unlimited potentials is reiterated by saints and sages, as well as by the Purans and Upanishads which eulogize the holy name's powers and effects in no uncertain terms¹. (2)

[¹The immensity of glory, the stupendous spiritual importance and significance as well as the astounding mystical powers of Lord Ram's holy name have been enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

संतत जपत संभु अबिनासी । सिव भगवान ग्यान गुन रासी ॥ ३ ॥
आकर चारि जीव जग अहहीं । कासीं मरत परम पद लहहीं ॥ ४ ॥

santata japata sambhu abināsi. siva bhagavāna gyāna guna rāsi. 3.
ākara cāri jīva jaga ahahīm. kāsīm marata parama pada lahaīm. 4.

Lord Shiva—who is the eternal Lord God, a treasury of bliss and joy, and an embodiment of Gyan and Gunas (spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and auspicious virtues respectively)—constantly and without a break repeats this holy name (of Lord Ram)¹. (3)

There are four categories of Jivas (creatures; living beings)² in this world, and all of them attain emancipation and salvation if they leave their mortal coil (i.e. die) at the holy place known as Kashi (Varanasi)³. (4)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 60; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.

²From the perspective of this physical world where a living being is recognized by its physical gross body, there are said to be four types or categories of Jivas (living beings). They are the following:-

(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa or aspect of the Atma called Anna Maye Kosh or Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder.

(ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom.

(iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level.

(iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

³Those who die at Kashi find liberation and deliverance for their souls because Lord Shiva, the presiding deity of this holy place, utters the holy name of Lord Ram in the dying creature's ears. This holy name is so powerful that once the creature hears it, it is sure to find salvation for itself. This fact is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119.]

सोपि राम महिमा मुनिराया । सिव उपदेसु करत करि दाया ॥ ५ ॥
रामु कवन प्रभु पूछउँ तोही । कहिअ बुझाइ कृपानिधि मोही ॥ ६ ॥

sōpi rāma mahimā munirāyā. siva upadēsu karata kari dāyā. 5.
rāmu kavana prabhu pūcha'um' tōhī. kahi'a bujhā'i kṛpānidhi mōhī. 6.

[Sage Bharadwaj said—] Oh the most exalted sage (Yagyavalkya)! This supreme form of death that a creature gets if it dies at Kashi (i.e. the reward of spiritual liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation) is also due to the divine glory and mystical powers of Lord Ram. It is because Lord Shiva utters the holy and salvation-providing name of Lord Ram in the ears of the dying Jiva, thereby providing it with immediate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration, which in effect gives its soul the benefit of salvation and emancipation. (5)

But I am confused (by the worldly deeds and acts of the Lord on the one hand, and these mystical powers and glories of the Lord as espoused by the Purans, the Upanishads and Lord Shiva himself; they seem to be contradictory and do not seem to add up). Therefore, I most humbly ask you this question: “Who really is Lord Ram?”

Please be gracious and kind enough to explain this mystery to me properly. (6)

एक राम अवधेस कुमारा । तिन्ह कर चरित बिदित संसारा ॥ ७ ॥
नारि बिरहँ दुखु लहेउ अपारा । भयउ रोषु रन रावनु मारा ॥ ८ ॥

ēka rāma avadhēsa kumārā. tinha kara carita bidita sansārā. 7.
nāri biraham' dukhu lahē'u apārā. bhaya'u rōṣu rana rāvanu mārā. 8.

One ‘Ram’ I am aware of is the son of the King of Ayodhya (i.e. Dasrath). His life and deeds are well known in this world. [It is because they have been repeatedly described in the many versions of the story of his life and time that is known as the Ramayan.] (7)

This ‘Ram’ had suffered a lot and wailed and grieved for his wife Sita (when the Lord was sent to forest exile by his father on the behest of his step-mother, and where his wife was abducted by the demon king Ravana). He was so angry at the abductor, i.e. Ravana, that he killed him (in the famous war of Lanka). (8)

दो०. प्रभु सोइ राम कि अपर कोउ जाहि जपत त्रिपुरारि ।
सत्यधाम सर्वग्य तुम्ह कहहु बिबेकुबिचारि ॥ ४६ ॥

dōhā.

prabhu sō'i rāma ki apara kō'u jāhi japata tripurāri.
satyadhāma sarbāgya tumha kahahu bibēku bicāri. 46.

Oh Lord, I am totally confounded. Who is the 'Ram' whose holy name Lord Tripurari (Shiva) repeats constantly as his preferred Mantra (spiritual formula)—is he the 'Ram' I have cited herein above (in the foregoing verses), or is he a different 'Ram'?

You are truthful and a repository of true knowledge. So please give due thought to my query and tell me about it. (Doha no. 46)

चौ०. जैसें मिटै मोर भ्रम भारी । कहहु सो कथा नाथ बिस्तारी ॥ १ ॥
जागबलिक बोले मुसुकाई । तुम्हहि बिदित रघुपति प्रभुताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaisēm miṭai mōra bhrama bhārī. kahahu sō kathā nātha bistārī. 1.
jāgabalika bōlē musukāī. tumhahi bidita raghupati prabhutāī. 2.

Oh Lord! In whatever way my ignorance and delusions can be removed, please be gracious enough to tell that story in detail.' (1)

Sage Yagyavalkya smiled in amusement¹ at Bharadwaj's poser. He replied—
'You are aware of the majesty of Lord Ram.

[¹To wit, I know that you are an acclaimed sage of great wisdom and enlightenment. So it is obvious that you pretend to be confused, but I am sure you are not. I'll explain why herein below!]

रामभगत तुम्ह मन क्रम बानी । चतुराई तुम्हारि मैं जानी ॥ ३ ॥
चाहहु सुनै राम गुन गूढ़ा । कीन्हहु प्रस्न मनहुँ अति मूढ़ा ॥ ४ ॥

rāmabhagata tumha mana krama bānī. caturāī tumhāri mairi jānī. 3.
cāhahu sunai rāma guna gūṛhā. kīnhihu prasna manahum'ati mūṛhā. 4.

You are a devotee par-excellence of Lord Ram by your Mana (mind and heart), your Karma (deeds) and your Vaani (words; speech). [There is no doubt about it.] I have realized your ploy; you are indeed very clever. (3)

Actually, you want to hear in detail and in depth about the astounding glories, the holiness and divinity of Lord Ram that have profound meaning and implications. That is why you are pretending to be naïve and ignorant about it¹.

[¹It is because you feel that if you do not pretend to be ignorant and eager to learn about something few people know, then I may not preach and unfold this profound secret to you. You think that if you do not show eagerness and earnestness to know about Lord Ram's truth, I may think you are joking with me and teasing me, and so I may ignore you. That's why presumably you have assumed a face of utter ignorance and confusion that is just enough to sufficiently encourage me so that I would expound about this mystical theme for your spiritual benefit. Well, I

understand, but I would have told you everything nevertheless as it is great privilege to remember and speak about the glories of Lord Ram, for this exercise in itself is a provider of extreme bliss, joy, happiness and peace to both the narrator as well as the hearer.] (4)

तात सुनहु सादर मनु लाई । कहउँ राम कै कथा सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥
महामोहु महिषेसु बिसाला । रामकथा कालिका कराला ॥ ६ ॥

tāta sunahu sādara manu lā'ī. kaha'um̐ rāma kai kathā suhā'ī. 5.
mahāmōhu mahiṣesu bisālā. rāmakathā kālikā karālā. 6.

Therefore dear (tāta), listen to it attentively with reverence and faith in your heart. I shall narrate the story of Lord Ram which is exceedingly pleasant and wonderful¹. (5)

In this world, the great delusions and its attendant confusions and doubts that overwhelm a creature (mahāmōhu) are like the huge demon that had the form of the great he-buffalo (mahiṣesu bisālā). Lord Ram's sacred, divine and holy story (rāmakathā) is like the ferocious goddess Kali (kālikā karālā) who had slayed this horrifying demon². (6)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47 which explicitly reiterates this fact.

²To wit, just like the case of Kali easily killing this ferocious demon, Lord Ram's story too can easily eliminate all sorts of delusions that cause so much emotional suffering and spiritual misery for the creature.] (6)

रामकथा ससि किरन समाना । संत चकोर करहिं जेहि पाना ॥ ७ ॥
ऐसेइ संसय कीन्ह भवानी । महादेव तब कहा बखानी ॥ ८ ॥

rāmakathā sasi kirana samānā. santa cakōra karahim̐ jēhi pānā. 7.
aisē'i sansaya kīnha bhavānī. mahādēva taba kahā bakhānī. 8.

Verily, Lord Ram's story is like the soothing rays of the moonlight. Just as this moonlight gives immense joy to the bird known as Chakor (the Indian red-legged partridge) which finds immense joy and solace while it is surrounded by its rays, saintly souls too enjoy and feel exhilarated when they hear the story of Lord Ram and imbibe its spiritual nectar. (7)

A similar type of doubt about the reality of Lord Ram, the question 'who Lord Ram actually is', was expressed by goddess Bhavani (the consort of Lord Bhava, i.e. Shiva). At that time, Lord Mahadeva (Shiva, the Great God) had explained the reality (of Lord Ram) to her. (8)

दो०. कहउँ सो मति अनुहारि अब उमा संभु संबाद ।
भयउ समय जेहि हेतु जेहि सुनु मुनि मिटिहि बिषाद ॥ ४७ ॥

dōhā.

kaha'um' sō mati anuhāri aba umā sambhu sambāda.
bhaya'u samaya jēhi hētu jēhi sunu muni miṭhi biṣāda. 47.

Now I shall tell you to the best of my ability about that conversation between Uma (another name of Bhavani) and Shambhu (Lord Shiva) in great detail.

I shall narrate for you when that conversation took place, and the provocation for it. Oh Sage, listen to it carefully for it has the potential to remove your vexations and the cause of your perplexities¹. (Doha no. 47)

[¹To wit, Lord Shiva's consort Uma was confused in the same way as sage Bharadwaj was about the reality of Lord Ram: whether the Lord was an ordinary human prince who went to the forest where he lost his wife Sita, and then he wondered here and there searching for her. Uma had asked Shiva a similar question as Bharadwaj has asked Yagyvalkya here.

So, in order to reassure Bharadwaj and comfort him that he need not be ashamed at his confusion about the reality of Lord Ram which shows him in poor light because he is reputed to be an enlightened and wise sage, Yagyavalkya cited the example of Uma, who is a goddess and the consort of Lord Shiva. If she can be confused and deluded, then after all Bharadwaj is a human being, and so therefore there is nothing to feel guilty about and be ashamed of.

The story of how Uma got deluded about the truth of Lord Ram, the evil consequences of this delusion, and how Lord Shiva later helped her overcome this delusion and its attendant doubts and perplexities has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Doha no. 120.]

चौ०. एक बार त्रेता जुग माहीं । संभु गए कुंभज रिषि पाहीं ॥ १ ॥
संग सती जगजननि भवानी । पूजे रिषि अखिलेस्वर जानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēka bāra trētā juga māhīm. sambhu ga'ē kumbhaja riṣi pāhīm. 1.
saṅga satī jagajanani bhavānī. pūjē riṣi akhilēsvara jānī. 2.

Once upon a time, during the age of Treta¹, Lord Shiva went to the hermitage of sage Kumbhaj (or sage Agastya)². (1)

The Lord (Shiva) was accompanied by Sati, his divine consort who is also known as Bhavani, and who is the great Mother of the entire creation. The sage reverentially worshipped him, knowing that he (Shiva) was the Lord of the entire creation. (2)

[Note—¹Trētā juga:- This era is equivalent to 3600 divine years of Gods, and 12,96,000 human years. It is second era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction. It was during this Yug that Lord Ram manifested on earth as an incarnation of Vishnu, and it concluded when the Lord left the earth for his heavenly abode.

²Sage Agastya/Kumbhaj—Sage Agastya is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a ‘Brahm-rishi’ or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as ‘Kumbha’. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vasistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named ‘Kaaleya’ managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, and (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanparva. This feat of sage Agastya is cited by Goswami Tulsidas in his epic narration of the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the Anand Ramayan (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24

where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

Sage Agastya lived in the Dandakaaranya forest when Lord Ram met him. The sage had then given some invincible divine weapons to the Lord which stood him in good stead during the epic war of Lanka, as well as in overcoming the demons whom the Lord encountered and destroyed during his sojourn in the formidable forest.

The sage is said to have brought about reconciliation between Indra, the king of Gods, and Maruts, the Wind Gods.

A whole class of people came to be known after him, and in due course the term 'Agastya' became a title and sort of honour given to learned sages and seers who were experts in the philosophy and knowledge that sage Agastya was an expert in and had preached during his lifetime. The sage has been made immortal by finding a place amongst the brightest stars in the sky. He is identified with Canopus, which is the brightest star in the sky of south India. The Canopus has been named after this sage as 'Agastya', and seeing this star in the sky when the sun is in the middle of Virgo (Kanyaa) sign of the zodiac and worshipping him at night is regarded as an auspicious deed. This is a symbolic way of honouring the sage by elevating him to an exalted stature of a 'bright star' and recognizing his stellar qualities.

He is regarded as the one who had created the Tamil language of South India. He is accredited as being the author of several treatises on medicine, mysticism and magic. One of his books is the 'Agastya Sanhita' which elaborately deals with ritualistic forms of worship.

It is said that once sage Agastya and the noble king named Shankha had a divine vision of Lord Vishnu at the banks of river Swami-pushkarni.]

रामकथा मुनिबर्ज बखानी । सुनी महेस परम सुखु मानी ॥ ३ ॥

रिषि पूछी हरिभगति सुहाई । कही संभु अधिकारी पाई ॥ ४ ॥

rāmakathā munibarja bakhānī. sunī mahēsa parama sukhu mānī. 3.

riṣi pūchī haribhagati suhāī. kahī sambhu adhikārī pāī. 4.

The exalted sage narrated the divine story of Lord Ram in great detail, hearing which Lord Mahesh (Shiva) found immense sense of contentedness, happiness and bliss¹. (3)

The sage in turn asked Lord Shiva to preach him about the virtue of Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Ram, which the Lord willingly described as he found the sage eligible for this knowledge². (4)

[Note—¹The wise sage Agastya knew that Lord Ram was very dear to Lord Shiva, and therefore he concluded that the best way to please Shiva was to narrate Lord Ram's story in detail. When an honoured guest arrives, the host would try his best to please him and entertain him. Lord Shiva was not an ordinary guest; he was the Lord of creation, "Mahesh", the 'Great Ish—Great Lord'. Naturally therefore he should be pleased with something that is the best, and nothing else was the 'best' than narration of the divine story of Lord Ram.

²As a return favour, the sage asked the Lord (Shiva) to enlighten him about the pleasant and spiritually elevating virtues of "Hari-Bhakti" (devotion for Lord Hari, or Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being and Lord God of the world whose incarnation on earth was in the form of Lord Ram).

Lord Shiva had been so pleased with the sage and so obliged by him (because the sage had narrated the whole divine story of Lord Ram) that he told the sage the characteristic features of "Hari-Bhakti" as desired, realising that the sage was eligible to hear it.

A similar case was that of Kaagbhusund. Lord Shiva had revealed the divine story of Lord Ram to him when he found that Kaagbhusund is eligible to hear it. And the eligibility criterion in case of Kaagbhusund was that he had 'devotion for Lord Ram'. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30.

So we see two aspects of eligibility condition here that would make one dear to Lord Ram and deemed to be fit to be called a devotee of the Lord: one is having 'devotion for Lord Ram' which entitles a person to know the esoteric secrets of the story of the Lord as was the case of Kaagbhusund, and the other is 'deriving joy and bliss by narrating the story of Lord Ram' that entitles him to have devotion as was the case with sage Agastya.

What is the lesson we learn from it: It is that narrating and hearing the divine story of Lord Ram and having devotion for the Lord complement and supplement each other. They are like the two sides of the same coin. One devoid of the other reduces their true potential and spiritual value.

#A very interesting observation can be made here. Lord Shiva is the one who had originally conceived the story of the Ramayan known as "Ram Charit Manas". From him it came to the knowledge of Kaagbhusund, and from the latter to sage Yagyavalkya. Later on it spread far and wide and became commonly known.

When this good word reached Shiva that the divine story of the Ramayan which he had revealed is benefiting a large number of Jivas and aiding in their spiritual welfare, he surely felt happy and contented. After all, all good things and all

good words need to be shown the light of day and helped to be spread for the long-term good of the society and mankind, while all bad things need to be buried and concealed for they cause harm to the world at large.

So first Lord Shiva was glad, but after some thought he wondered if the real intent and purpose of the story, which was to spread spiritual bliss and provide succour and solace to the Jiva's tormented soul and help them develop devotion for Lord God amidst the world's churn and flux, is being truly fulfilled or not. Is the integrity of original story maintained, or has it been diluted, corrupted and deformed during its transmission and propagation from one sage to another, from one preacher to another, from one listener to another, from one generation to another.

Therefore, Lord Shiva wished to verify facts and ascertain whether the story Kaagbhusund narrates is true to the original version he (Shiva) had revealed to him, and whether or not any distortion has crept in the story amongst those who had heard it from Kaagbhusund and narrated it to others down the line. For Shiva feared that usually this happens, because often times the preacher is not correctly understood by his disciple who grows up to become a preacher himself, and therefore the wrong understanding percolates down the line to corrupt the next generation of preachers who tweak and twist the original version either due to their lack of grasp of the original story when they had first been taught by their own teacher, or due to the desire to please the audience which compels them to add a pinch of spice to the story, thereby ruining its pristine purity and authenticity.

Hence, Lord Shiva first went to hear it from Kaagbhusund. He was satisfied that it is indeed the same story he had conceived earlier in his Mana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 57.}

He was absolutely sure that Yagyavalkya cannot distort it for he was the most enlightened and the wisest sage of that time. There were however chances that those who have heard it from him or other sages may have injected some novelty in the story to spice it up. So he decided to check it from a third preacher who was preaching this story to others but who had not directly heard it from Yagyavalkya as was the case with Bharadwaj. So, Lord Shiva went to sage Aastya to hear the divine story of the Ramayan being narrated. He heard it attentively and was satisfied. It filled him with spiritual solace, joy and bliss as he expected the story to do. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 48; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51.}

But there was a problem with sage Agastya. What was it? Though it is true that his narration of the story of the Ramayan was correct to the last dot, the sage could not develop the virtue of 'Bhakti' or devotion for Lord Ram inside his inner-self, something which is the main objective of preaching, listening and reading this story. The wise sage acknowledged this shortcoming in himself, and asked Lord Shiva to preach him about 'Bhakti' so that he becomes fulfilled and feels fully rewarded for having heard the Ramayan himself and endeavouring to spread the good word by preaching it to others. Shiva willingly obliged the sage. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 48.}]

(viii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha no. 124-b:-

सो०. कहउँ राम गुन गाथ भरद्वाज सादर सुनहु ।

भव भंजन रघुनाथ भजु तुलसी तजि मान मद ॥ १२४ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

kaha'um̐ rāma guna gātha bharadvāja sādara sunahu.

bhava bhanjāna raghunātha bhaju tulasī taji māna mada. 124 (b).

[Sage Yagyavalkya said to sage Bharadwaj—] ‘Oh Bharadwaj! I shall now narrate the divine, sacred and holy story of Lord Ram. Listen to it attentively and a lot of reverence and faith.’

Tulsidas (who penned the Book “Ram Charit Manas” which contains this conversation between Yagyavalkya and Bharadwaj) makes this observation: One should abandon pride and all kinds of arrogance and ego¹ to listen this story of Lord Ram which has the mystical potential to rupture all delusions and torments associated with this gross mortal world of transmigration (birth and death). (Sortha no. 124-b)

[¹When one is proud and egoist, he would feel ashamed to acknowledge that his knowledge is limited, that there is much more to hear and learn. A proud person would boast not only of his superior wisdom and knowledge but would also think that no one has more devotion for the Lord God than he has, or that no one is more diligent in leading an auspicious and holy way of life than he does. This will lead to his downfall and spiritual degradation. Tulsidas asserts that one should never have a false sense of pride and ego if one really wants to attain spiritual elevation leading to bliss and attaining the goal of receiving blessings from Lord Ram.

There are sterling instances in the story of Ram Charit Manas where we learn what happens if one listens to the divine story of Lord Ram with due attention, faith and reverence, and what happens if it is the opposite.

Garud had listened to the story fulfilling all the requirements—i.e. he listened to it attentively, with due devotion and belief, and the reward was that all his delusions that produced mental agitations and confusions were dispelled. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69.

On the other hand, we have the instance of Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, who listened to the same story alongside her husband at the hermitage of sage Agastya but unfortunately her mind was occupied somewhere else, and the result was that whatever mental peace she had was also lost, and she became overwhelmed with delusions that caused immense mental restlessness to her. The consequences were so grave that she lost faith even in her own husband’s words of advice for her which ultimately forced Lord Shiva to abandon her for her impertinence and irreverence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.

Lord Shiva has clearly hinted to Parvati about this fact—that the story which he had told her earlier but which could not remove her spiritual delusions was the same story which filled Garud with immense spiritual joy and a feeling of blessedness when all his doubts and confusions were removed. This will be evident when we read Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 68 in conjunction with Shiva’s next observation in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69.

(ix) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 113:-

मुनि मोहि कछुक काल तहँ राखा । रामचरितमानस तब भाषा ॥ ९ ॥
सादर मोहि यह कथा सुनाई । पुनि बोले मुनि गिरा सुहाई ॥ १० ॥

muni mōhi kachuka kāla taham̐ rākhā. rāmacaritamānasa taba bhāṣā. 9.
sādara mōhi yaha kathā sunāī. puni bōlē muni girā suhāī. 10.

The sage (Lomus) kept me there (at his hermitage) for sometime, and narrated the divine, sacred and holy story of Lord Ram, known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’, to me¹. (9)

After narrating the whole story to me, the sage once again spoke to me most affectionately as follows --- (10)

[¹This is the second time Kaagbhusund has heard this story of the Ram Charit Manas. Earlier he had heard it from Lord Shiva—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30. Kaagbhusund had heard this story from Lord Shiva in his Spirit form while the Lord was narrating it his consort Parvati, whereas it is in his physical gross form as a crow that he has heard it from sage Lomus now for the second time.]

रामचरित सर गुप्त सुहावा । संभु प्रसाद तात मैं पावा ॥ ११ ॥
तोहि निज भगत राम कर जानी । ताते मैं सब कहेउँ बखानी ॥ १२ ॥

rāmacarita sara gupta suhāvā. sambhu prasāda tāta mair̐ pāvā. 11.
tōhi nija bhagata rāma kara jānī. tātē mair̐ saba kahē'um̐ bakhānī. 12.

This divine lake of spiritual nectar (known as Ram Charit Manas) is very pleasant and sweet but difficult to access as it is quite secret and sublime in nature. Dear (tāta), I received it as a grace of Lord Shiva. (11)

Realising that you are a dear devotee of Lord Ram, I decided to narrate the whole of the story to you. (12)

The Nomenclature of the Story:

(a) ‘Ram Charit Manas’: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 11-13 that precedes Doha no. 35:-

रामचरितमानस एहि नामा । सुनत श्रवन पाइअ बिश्रामा ॥ ७ ॥

rāmacaritamānasa ēhi nāmā. sunata śravana pā'i'a bisrāmā. 7.

The name of this holy, sacred and divine story is 'Ram Charit Manas'. By hearing it, the ears (i.e. the listeners) find rest and peace. (7)

रचि महेस निज मानस राखा । पाइ सुसमउ सिवा सन भाषा ॥ ११ ॥
तातें रामचरितमानस बर । धरेउ नाम हियँ हेरि हरषि हर ॥ १२ ॥

raci mahēsa nija mānasa rākhā. pā'i susama'u sivā sana bhāṣā. 11.
tātēṁ rāmacaritamānasa bara. dharē'u nāma hiyaṁ hēri haraṣi hara. 12.

Lord Mahesh (Shiva) had created or conceived it enshrined it in his Mana (the sacred chambers of his subtle heart and mind). At the opportune time he had told it to his consort Siva. (11)

This is the reason why this story is called 'Ram Charit Manas'—for it was conceived (or viewed; visualised) by Lord Har (Shiva) in his Mana². He loved and adored its beauty and spiritual value exceedingly, and so he reverentially, with due affection and devotion, enshrined it in his heart.

[That is why this Ram Charit Manas is the most revered and best form of the story of Lord Ram. It is because this story was conceived by Lord Shiva himself, then enshrined in the Lord's sacred heart, and he was the first one to reveal it to goddess Parvati.

It is Lord Shiva who had given it the name of 'Ram Charit Manas' when he observed that the mystical deeds done by Lord Ram when he had manifested himself on earth as a human being for the good of his devotees ("Ram Charit") was reflected in his (Shiva's) own heart ("Manas") while he was meditating upon the Lord and repeating his holy name during his spiritual practices.

This clearly establishes that it was Lord Shiva who had himself named this sacred, holy and divine story pertaining to Lord Ram as "Ram Charit Manas"] (12)

कहउँ कथा सोइ सुखद सुहाई । सादर सुनहु सुजन मन लाई ॥ १३ ॥

kaha'um' kathā sō'i sukhada suhā'ī. sādara sunahu sujana mana lā'ī. 13.

I (saint-poet Goswami who had penned the Ram Charit Manas in the present world) am telling you the same story that gives joy and happiness, is pleasant and sweet to hear, and is spiritually uplifting. So, on wise ones, listen to it attentively. (13)

(b) "Ram Charit Sara": Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 113:-

रामचरित सर गुप्त सुहावा । संभु प्रसाद तात मैं पावा ॥ ११ ॥

rāmacarita sara gupta suhāvā. sambhu prasāda tāta mair' pāvā. 11.

This divine lake of spiritual nectar (known as Ram Charit Manas) is very pleasant and sweet but difficult to access as it is quite secret and sublime in nature. Dear (tāta), I received it as a grace of Lord Shiva. (11)

(c) “Hari Charit Manas”: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53:-

हरिचरित्र मानस तुम्ह गावा । सुनि मैं नाथ अमिति सुख पावा ॥ ७ ॥

haricaritra mānasa tumha gāvā. suni maim nātha amiti sukha pāvā. 7.

[Uma or Parvati said to Lord Shiva—] ‘Oh Lord! You have narrated the divine deeds and life of Lord Hari (Vishnu who had manifested himself in the body of Lord Ram)¹, which is like a lake of spiritual ambrosia sprouting from your blessed heart (“Hari-charitra” + “Manas”)², has given me immense delight and happiness. [And for this, I am highly obliged to you.] (7)

(d) “Ram Katha”: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 31:-

बुध बिश्राम सकल जन रंजनि । रामकथा कलि कलुष बिभंजनि ॥ ५ ॥
रामकथा कलि पंनग भरनी । पुनि बिबेक पावक कहूँ अरनी ॥ ६ ॥

budha biśrāma sakala jana ranjani. rāmakathā kali kaluṣa bibhanjani. 5.
rāmakathā kali pannaga bharanī. puni bibēka pāvaka kahum̐ aranī. 6.

The spiritual story of Lord Ram, known as the ‘Ram Katha’ (rāmakathā), gives peace and rest to those who are wise, sagacious and enlightened. It delights all those who hear it, making them happy and blissful. It neutralises the negative effects of all the spiritual taints associated with Kaliyug. (5)

For the serpent symbolising Kaliyug, this Ram Katha is like a peacock (which is an enemy of serpents as it eats them).

[To wit, the divine story of Lord Ram is as beautiful as the peacock because on the one hand it is charming, sweet and pleasant to hear and delights the heart, and on the other hand it destroys a creature’s numerous fears and torments arising out of the evil nature of Kaliyug just like the beautiful peacock that devours the poisonous snake.]

For the purpose of kindling the fire of spiritualism and wisdom, it is like a piece of firewood known as ‘Arani’.

[During fire sacrifices, two pieces of firewood are rubbed vigorously to create a spark that lights up the sacred fire in the sacrificial pit. So, when one hears, reflects and contemplates upon this divine story for some time, spirituality and wisdom sprouts automatically in his heart and mind.] (6)

रामकथा कलि कामद गाई । सुजन सजीवनि मूरि सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥

rāmakathā kali kāmada gā'ī. sujana sajīvani mūri suhā'ī. 7.

Ram Katha is like the all wish-fulfilling cow known as Kaamdhenu in the era of Kaliyug (i.e. in the present world, it fulfils all the wishes of devotees). For those who are wise and good, it is like a magical root that provides whatever they want¹. (7)

[¹To wit, a wise and enlightened person would not want worldly things; he would want spiritual blessedness, an eternal source of happiness, joy and peace, something that frees them from the miseries of life in this world and gives them liberation from the cycle of birth and death by providing deliverance to their soul. All these can be accomplished by hearing and narrating Ram Katha.]

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The Kaagbhusund Ramayan Or The Aadi Ramayan

(Based on ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of Goswami Tulsidas)

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes]

PROLOGUE

[Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Doha no. 62.]

Lord Shiva had narrated the divine story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being and the Lord God whom Shiva worshipped, to his consort Parvati. Shiva had told her about the immense spiritual significance and metaphysical importance of this sublime story which had thrilled Parvati exceptionally. Shiva had emphasised the fact that this is a story that not only gives spiritual bliss and peace to the hearer as well as the narrator, but also paves for their liberation and deliverance from this mundane world.

He wound up his discourse by saying that what he had told Parvati was once heard by him when he had attended its discourse at the hermitage of one saintly crow named Kaagbhusund, and its narration had made him extremely ecstatic, making him feel as if he had drunk the nectar of bliss and euphoria.

Parvati was baffled. A lot of questions popped-up in her head: Who was this crow Kaagbhusund; how had he attained such a high state of spiritual realisation and had become so extremely enlightened that Lord Shiva, who himself was the progenitor of this holy story of Lord Ram that is universally known as the “Ramayan”, would be so charmed by Kaagbhusund and fascinated by narration of the Ramayan by the latter; what was so special about Kaagbhusund’s narration that Shiva chose to quote it and single this crow for such lavish praise inspite of the fact that there is a long legend of great sages, seers and saints who have sung this sublime story of Ramayan down the ages, from time immemorial; and in the event that Kaagbhusund was indeed so exalted as Shiva indicates him to be then why did he become a ‘crow’ in the first place instead of having taken birth in some higher echelon of creation? [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 55.]

The highly sublime and spiritually fulfilling story of the ‘Ramayan’ as narrated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund was the result of this inquisition by Parvati. Lord Shiva felt privileged that he has once again got an opportunity to narrate the holy story of Ramayan which would not only give him a renewed chance to fill his mind and heart with ecstasy and bliss but would also help him to further emphasise the glory and divinity of this holy story for the welfare of all the living beings in this creation. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 120 ka—kha; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 55 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-9.]

The “Kaagbhusund Ramayan”, therefore, is a blessing-in-disguise: it not only re-tells the divine story of Lord Ram but brings to the fore and explores some subtle points which might have missed the reader and the hearer alike during the earlier narration of the story in the main text of the epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of which it is a part.

चौ०. गिरिजा सुनहु बिसद यह कथा । मैं सब कही मोरि मति जथा ॥ १ ॥

राम चरित सत कोटि अपारा । श्रुति सारदा न बरनै पारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

girijā sunahu bisada yaha kathā. maim saba kahī mōri mati jathā. 1.
rāma carita sata kōṭi apārā. śruti sārādā na baranai pārā. 2.

Lord Shiva said to his consort Parvati—‘Listen Girija (literally, the daughter of the king of the mountains; meaning Parvati). I have elaborately told you this divine and glorious story (of Lord Ram, known as the ‘Ramayan’), which is timeless and ageless, as best as I could and in the way my mind could understand it¹. (1)

The countless stories that narrate the innumerable deeds of Lord Ram (which he had done in his manifestation as a human prince in the kingdom of Ayodhya in different cycles of creation) are endless and without any dimension. They are eternal, and they defy understanding, counting and delineation so much so that even the Srutis (the Vedas) and Sarda (Saraswati, the goddess of learning and knowledge) are not able to find an end to narrating them². (2)

[Note—¹When Lord Shiva had begun to narrate the story of Ramayan to Parvati he had told her that he would do so according to his understanding and wisdom. He had also hinted at that time that later on he would tell her the story as it was narrated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 120 kha and ga.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; and (ii) Doha no. 33 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

Lord Ram’s divine glories are endless and beyond the ability of the mind to comprehend and narrate. The Lord is eternal and infinite. Yet, legend of sages, seers and saints has attempted to narrate this story in their own limited way as a means to purify their mind and speech. Lord Shiva says that he is also doing the same. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 121.

Shiva’s modesty and humbleness is shining through these verses. He does not claim that he is the best of all the narrators; he has not only given full credit to Kaagbhusund for narration of Ramayan, but goes on to say that when the great scriptures known as the Vedas as well the goddess of knowledge and speech known as Saraswati fail to describe the divine story of Ramayan to complete satisfaction, how can he claim to be perfect.

He also wishes to convey the idea that when even the Vedas, the primary scriptures unfolded by the creator Brahma himself, and Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and speech, have failed to describe the divine story of Lord Ram fully—

what they did narrate was like merely scratching its surface, then one can imagine the vastness and glory of this story that is known as the 'Ramayan'.

In fact, this glorious story has been told and retold thousands of times, but still there seems to be no end to its variations and narrators. It is timeless, ageless; it is like the ocean that has no beginning or end.

The wonderful thing to note here is that Lord Shiva has no sense of ego or pride in him. He has no compunctions in admitting his limitations and acknowledging the fact that though he himself is the greatest of all the gods (which is why he is honoured by the epithet 'Maha-Deva', literally meaning a Great God), the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram is 'the greatest of all'. Shiva's admission of limited ability to describe the vastness of the story of Lord Ram though he was its primary conceiver and narrator is an example of modesty and humbleness. It does not mean at all that Shiva lacked wisdom or enlightenment, or that his own understanding or narration of the divine story of Lord Ram was lacking in any way, but it shows his greatness that he has no reservations in giving credit to others, in the present case it is the saintly crow Kaagbhusund, who have sung the divine story of the Ramayan.

The subtle message is obvious: good things must be shared by all, one must never boast of his wisdom and knowledge, and that the benevolence of the Lord is like nectar which is like a vast ocean whose water cannot be measured. And, just like the case of the ocean that has been artificially assigned different names but its water is the same everywhere, the divine story of Lord Ram has been narrated by a long legend of narrators, including Shiva and Kaagbhusund, but its beauty, its spiritual nectar remains the same.

Earlier also in the rendering of the epic Ram Charit Manas, we find this shining example of Lord Shiva's modesty when he says that what he describes is according to his limited wisdom and knowledge. Nowhere has he boasted of being an expert in the spiritual philosophy associated with the story of Ramayan (refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 120-d.)

राम अनंत अनंत गुनानी । जन्म कर्म अनंत नामानी ॥ ३ ॥

जल सीकर महि रज गनि जाहीं । रघुपति चरित न बरनि सिराहीं ॥ ४ ॥

rāma ananta ananta gunānī. janma karma ananta nāmānī. 3.

jala sīkara mahi raja gani jāhīm. raghupati carita na barani sirāhīm. 4.

Lord Ram is infinite, and so are his glories. He has taken countless births, has done countless deeds, and his names are also countless¹. (3)

In fact, it may be possible to count the number of drops of water in rain, or the number of grains of sand on the surface of earth, but is absolutely impossible to describe the divine deeds and stories associated with Lord Ram², the Lord of the Raghu's line of illustrious kings of Ayodhya. (4)

[Note—¹The infinity of Lord Ram and his glories have been emphasised elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas: Refer—Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 33; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 114.

²Refer also to Srimad Bhagwat, 2/7/40 where it is said that even if there is someone so great that he has been able to count the number of dust particles on earth, yet no one can ever claim to be able to count the glories of the Lord God.

There is another instance in Srimad Bhagwat where the same idea, that the glories and names of Lord are uncountable and infinite, has been emphasised. When Muchakunda, the son of Mandhata of the Ikshwaku race, asked Lord Krishna about the latter's birth, clan and deeds, Krishna replied—'My names, births and deeds are infinite and countless. I can't count them and enumerate them to you. Even if in some person is able to count the physical grains of dust on the surface of earth during the course of his numerous births, adding to the tally of the total number of dusts particles counted in the previous birth to the total counted in the present birth, he still won't be able to count my (Krishna's) names, deeds and glories.' Refer: Srimad Bhagwat, 10/51/38-40.]

बिमल कथा हरि पद दायनी । भगति होइ सुनि अनपायनी ॥ ५ ॥

उमा कहिउँ सब कथा सुहाई । जो भुसुंडि खगपतिहि सुनाई ॥ ६ ॥

कछुक राम गुन कहेउँ बखानी । अब का कहौं सो कहहु भवानी ॥ ७ ॥

bimala kathā hari pada dāyanī. bhagati hō'i suni anapāyanī. 5.

umā kahi'um̐ saba kathā suhāī. jō bhusuṇḍi khagapatihi sunāī. 6.

kachuka rāma guna kahē'um̐ bakhānī. aba kā kahaur̐ sō kahahu bhavānī. 7.

This sacred story enables a person to attain the divine abode of Lord Hari (Vishnu)¹; it also simultaneously bestows upon the person the blessing of having an eternal devotion ('Bhakti') for the Lord².* (5)

[Lord Shiva said to Parvati—] 'Oh Uma (Parvati)! I have told you the entire story (of Lord Ram) which was narrated by (the saintly crow) Kaagbhusund to Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu when he was overcome with delusions and began to doubt the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram)³. (6)

I have described to you a few of the countless virtues and glories of Lord Ram⁴ (to the best of my ability⁵).

Now tell me, oh Bhavani (another name of Parvati), what more should I tell you about.⁶ (7)

[Note—Verse no. 5 makes it clear that the two great benefits of hearing the holy story of Lord Ram are the following—(i) It entitles the hearer to attain heaven, or from the metaphysical perspective, to attain liberation and deliverance from this mundane world of grossness and reach the higher spiritual existence of bliss and happiness symbolized by the abode of Lord Vishnu. (ii) It helps the hearer to develop the grand virtues of having unstinted and unflinching devotion for Lord God, which in turn paves the way for his all-round spiritual welfare. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 119.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128.

²Saint Kaag-Bhusund has elaborately described the importance of having ‘Bhakti’ or devotion for Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu), who is represented by Lord Ram as the latter is a visible, a tangible form of Hari’s invisible cosmic form, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 115—to Doha no. 120.

*The other benefit, the ‘third’ one, is mentioned in Chaupai line no. 9 herein below where Parvati tells that one of the great benefits of hearing the divine story of Lord Ram is that the creature finds freedom from fear associated with this world consisting of an endless of birth and death and its associated horrors.

³Earlier, in the very beginning of the rendering of the epic story of Ramayan, we read that Lord Shiva tells Parvati that he will narrate to her the divine story of the life, times and deeds of Lord Ram as he had heard from sage Kaagbhusund—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 120-b.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 68 where Lord Shiva once again affirms that the version of the story of Ramayan which he had told Parvati is the one which Kaagbhusund had told Garud.

⁴Lord Shiva clearly indicates that no one should be under the delusions that whatever has been narrated in this story of Lord Ram known as the ‘Ramayan’ is a complete and comprehensive dossier about the Lord. It is merely a fractional part of the whole entity which is so vast and endless like the fathomless sky that no one can ever measure even one remote corner of its huge realm. What has been narrated here is just to help the creature become aware of the immense opportunities that lie before him for his own spiritual welfare if he develops a sense of love, affection, devotion and complete submission towards Lord Ram.

Shiva has already asserted that it is impossible to fully narrate the divine story of Lord Ram hereinbefore in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 52.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52 hereinbefore.

⁶By saying this, Lord Shiva has left the doors open for Parvati to ask more questions so that all her doubts are satisfied. This is the way for a good narrator and a teacher—he always engages his audience or students respectively, and makes them feel free to ask questions and remove their doubts.

We shall read a little later how sage Kaagbhusund had engaged Garud in a free discussion about the different aspects of the story of Ramayan, as well as the many spiritual benefits one gets by hearing this divine story. In fact, the entire text of the ‘Kaagbhusund Ramayan’ revolves around this discourse.

We will note that the actual story of Ramayan has been narrated by Kaagbhusund only in brief (from Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 68). The major part of the Ramayan attributed to him is on the lines of the Upanishads where a learned teacher not only preaches but clearly explains the secrets of the scriptures to his disciples by elaborating on them and engaging the disciple by letting him ask questions and satisfy all his doubts. It’s not a one-way lecture from a high podium, but a session where all the doubts of the listener are removed. The intelligent teacher guesses what the student may doubt about, and explains the concepts even if the student is hesitant to ask him about them.]

सुनि सुभ कथा उमा हरषानी । बोली अति बिनीत मृदु बानी ॥ ८ ॥
 धन्य धन्य मैं धन्य पुरारी । सुनेउँ राम गुन भव भय हारी ॥ ९ ॥

sunī subha kathā umā haraṣānī. bōlī ati binīta mṛdu bānī. 8.
 dhan'ya dhan'ya mair̥m dhan'ya purārī. sunē'um̐ rāma guna bhava bhaya hārī.
 9.

When Uma heard this auspicious story of Lord Ram (i.e. the 'Ramayan'), she was thrilled and exhilarated. She prayerfully replied to Lord Shiva with words that were very sweet and pleasant to hear¹. (8)

Goddess Uma said—'Oh Purari (one of the many names of Lord Shiva²)! I am thrice most fortunate and blessed because I have heard the divine praises, the divine virtues and glories of Lord Ram which have the potential to eliminate the dark fear of this world and its cycle of birth and death³. (9)

[Note—¹This is the magic of Lord Ram's story: both the narrator and the hearer enjoy it equally; both of them are overcome with surging emotions of devotion and spirituality that make them ecstatic and overjoyed.

When Garud had heard the story of Ramayan from Kaagbhusund, he too was extremely ecstatic so much so that his wings swelled up with excitement—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 69-a.

Then later on we shall read that when Garud finally spoke to Kaagbhusund, his words were prayerful and extremely polite, the reason being that all his doubts had been removed—refer: Uttar Kand, Doha no. 124-b.

The same thing applies to Parvati here—all her doubts had been removed when she had heard the story of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53.

²Lord Shiva is called 'Purari' because he had slayed the demon known as Tripura.

³This is the third benefit of hearing the divine story of Lord Ram. The first two benefits are narrated in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52 herein above.]

दो०. तुहरी कृपाँ कृपायतन अब कृतकृत्य न मोह ।
 जानेउँ राम प्रताप प्रभु चिदानंद संदोह ॥ ५२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

tumharī kṛpām̐ kṛpāyatana aba kṛtakṛtya na mōha.
 jānē'um̐ rāma pratāpa prabhu cidānanda sandōha. 52 (a).

'Oh merciful Lord! By your grace and benevolence, I feel extremely fulfilled today, and have no delusions or doubts left in my mind now¹. I have come to know the

realities and the greatness and the glories of Lord Ram who is an eternal abode (or an embodiment) of (spiritual) bliss. (Doha no. 52 ka)

[Note—¹Parvati had been confused and confounded about the reality of Lord Ram. She wondered why the Supreme Lord of creation would become a man; why would he become a son of a king. Once, when she saw the Lord wondering in the forest in search of his wife Sita who had been abducted by the demon king Ravana as part of the great scheme laid out by the Supreme Lord to get rid of the cruel demons led by their king Ravana who had become immune to regular modes of punishments because of the blessings he got when he had done severe Tapa (penance) to please Brahma, the creator. When Parvati saw that Lord Shiva, her husband, bowed his head before Lord Ram, she wondered how it was possible that the Supreme Being, who is supposed to be all-knowing, would not know where his wife Sita was, and who had stolen her. She was also confused because the Lord who is supposed to be beyond worldly miseries and attachments would be so worried about his wife and grieve for her. So, she had asked her husband Lord Shiva to remove her doubts, and it was this reason why Shiva had narrated the story of the Ramayan to her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 111.}]

नाथ तवानन ससि स्रवत कथा सुधा रघुबीर ।

श्रवन पुटन्हि मन पान करि नहिं अघात मतिधीर ॥ ५२ (ख) ॥

nātha tavānana sasi sravata kathā sudhā raghubīra.
śravana puṭanhi mana pāna kari nahim aghāta matidhīra. 52 (b).

Oh Lord who has a firm conviction and a resolute mind (‘Mati-dhir’)¹! The nectar symbolized by Lord Ram’s divine story drips from your mouth, and my ears are like the cup that continues to collect this dripping ambrosia but does not seem to feel contented (i.e. I want to hear more of it). (Doha no. 52 kha).

[Note—¹This is an important observation. It means that only those who have a firm and steady mind won’t get lost in the deep sea of confusions and doubts associated with the myriad ways the Lord has made his presence felt in the world. They won’t be deluded by the grossness of the world and confused by the mysterious ways of the Lord.

Merely hearing the story is not enough; one must understand its hidden message and learn to derive spiritual benefit from it. Otherwise it is like just hearing the rendition of some ancient mythological story. And this is possible only with a steady mind that does not fall victim to distractions, and is determined to pursue the truth so as to reach its goal of acquiring knowledge shorn of all falsehood.

The sight of Lord Ram wondering in the forest in search of his wife Sita had confused Parvati but had not confused Shiva. It is because Shiva had a steady mind that stood firm in its conviction about the divinity of Lord Ram as opposed to Parvati who unsteady mind was misled by the physical appearances of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 52.]

चौ०. राम चरित जे सुनत अघाहीं । रस बिसेष जाना तिन्ह नाहीं ॥ १ ॥
जीवनमुक्त महामुनि जेऊ । हरि गुन सुनहिं निरंतर तेऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma carita jē sunata aghāhīm. rasa bisēṣa jānā tinha nāhīm. 1.
jīvanamukta mahāmuni jē'ū. hari guna sunahīm nirantara tē'ū. 2.

Those who feel satisfied by hearing the divine story of Lord Ram, those who think that hearing it once or twice is enough and there is no need to repeatedly hear it, such people have not become aware of its true beauty and sublimity as being a great source of nectar of spirituality that is a bestower of eternal bliss and liberation¹. (1)

Those great sages who have attained the highest level of spiritual realisation, and have consequently obtained ultimate beatitude and felicity even while they are still alive in this world and live in it like ordinary human beings, even such exalted sages continue to hear the divine story of Lord Hari (Ram) that praises the Lord's infinite glories and eclectic virtues². (2)

[Note—¹The same idea has been expressed by sage Valmiki when he told Lord Ram where the latter should live. Valmiki said that those whose ears are like an endless ocean in which all the mighty rivers pour their contents in a never-ending gush but which never gets filled by them—the Lord should reside in the heart of such persons. In other words, Lord Ram should live in the heart of all such people who never feel satisfied by hearing the divine story of the Lord, his glories and praises. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 128 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-4.

²The great sages who have attained 'Jivan Mukti', meaning 'obtaining spiritual liberation even while one continues to live in this gross mundane world', find bliss, peace, felicity and beatitude by hearing the nectar-like story of Lord Ram. It helps them to wean their mind away from the world and its temptations and delusions, and focus it on something that is sublime and holy. Sage Valmiki has hinted to this in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 130. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 42 which is explicit on this point.]

भव सागर चह पार जो पावा । राम कथा ता कहँ दूढ़ नावा ॥ ३ ॥
बिषइन्ह कहँ पुनि हरि गुन ग्रामा । श्रवन सुखद अरु मन अभिरामा ॥ ४ ॥

bhava sāgara caha pāra jō pāvā. rāma kathā tā kaham' dūṛha nāvā. 3.
biṣa'inha kaham' puni hari guna grāmā. śravana sukhada aru mana abhirāmā. 4.

If anyone wants to cross this vast world of an endless cycle of birth and death and its associated delusions, torments and miseries which are like a formidable ocean instilling fear in the hearts of even the most courageous and brave, then the divine

story of Lord Ram (known as the ‘Ramayan’) is like a robust and secure boat (i.e. a ship, though technically the word ‘Naava’ means a boat)¹. (3)

At the same time, those who like to enjoy listening to interesting stories being narrated that are both pleasant to hear as well as enchanting for the mind, stories that are sufficiently thrilling so as to keep them engaged and captivated by their sheer mystery and unending drama, such persons too find this divine story of Lord Ram very charming and fascinating to hear. (4)

[Note—¹The same idea has been expressed by the celestial sage Narad to sage Veda Vyas, the legendary narrator of the Srimad Bhagwat. Refer: Srimad Bhagwat, 1/6/35.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 64; (ii) Doha no. 126 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 1; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 129; (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 130.]

श्रवनवंत अस को जग माहीं । जाहि न रघुपति चरित सोहाहीं ॥ ५ ॥

ते जड़ जीव निजात्मक घाती । जिन्हहि न रघुपति कथा सोहाती ॥ ६ ॥

śravanavanta asa kō jaga māhīm. jāhi na raghupati carita sōhāhīm. 5.
tē jaṛa jīva nijātmaka ghātī. jinhahi na raghupati kathā sōhātī. 6.

Is there anyone alive in this world who has been empowered to hear with his ears but who does not like to hear the glories of Lord Raghupati (Ram) and is delighted to hear them¹? [In other words, the glories of Lord Ram and the stories associated with the Lord are so enchanting and captivating that all living beings who have been blessed with the organ of hearing known as the ‘ear’ feel happy and thrilled by listening to such stories and glories of the Lord, and there is no exception to it.] (5)

Indeed, such ‘Jivas’ (living-beings) who cannot tolerate hearing, or are reluctant to hear, the narrative of the divine stories and glories of Lord Raghupati are highly stupid and betrayers of their own souls². (6)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 112.

²This is because the soul or the ‘Atma’ of every living-being, which is the latter’s ‘true self’, yearns to find peace, bliss, solace and succour as well as liberation and deliverance from this entrapping, mundane and gross world of continuous misery and pain, an objective that is easily met by hearing about Lord Ram and his divine glories. But the reluctance of some people in allowing their souls access to this wonderful spiritual nectar which can be easily accessed by allowing their ears to hear the narration of Lord Ram’s divine glories, forces their souls to remain tormented and troubled, which in effect is equivalent to ‘betraying’ their own true ‘self’, their ‘soul’, by forcing the latter to remain entangled in a mess represented by this world of misery and pain by denying it the chance to find its peace that can be had by hearing the soothing narrative of the divine stories of Lord Ram, though such people assert that they are the best well-wishers of their own selves. It’s a great irony of creation!

They are ‘stupid’ because they waste their precious life in forcing their ears to hear useless chatter arising from this gross and worthless world which will not help their souls to find peace and bliss in any imaginable way. Instead of putting this organ of hearing, known as the ‘ears’, gifted to them by the creator, to any good use, and in the process helping their own souls, their ‘own selves’, in finding a source of eternal peace and bliss by allowing their ears to simultaneously enjoy the narrative of nectar-like stories of Lord Ram alongside hearing other things of the world, stupid people stop their ears from enjoying this great benefit which comes to it for free by being reluctant to hear, or outright shunning to hear, the stories and glories of Lord Ram.]

हरिचरित्र मानस तुम्ह गावा । सुनि मैं नाथ अमिति सुख पावा ॥ ७ ॥
तुम्ह जो कही यह कथा सुहाई । कागभसुंड़ि गरुड़ प्रति गाई ॥ ८ ॥

haricaritra mānasa tumha gāvā. suni maim nātha amiti sukha pāvā. 7.
tumha jō kahī yaha kathā suhāī. kāgabhasuṇḍi garuṛa prati gāī. 8.

[Uma or Parvati said to Lord Shiva—] ‘Oh Lord! You have narrated the divine deeds and life of Lord Hari (Vishnu who had manifested himself in the body of Lord Ram)¹, which is like a lake of spiritual ambrosia sprouting from your blessed heart (“Hari-charitra” + “Manas”)², has given me immense delight and happiness. [And for this, I am highly obliged to you.] (7)

You have said that this divine story was narrated by the saint-crow named Kaagbhusund to Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu)³. (8)

[Note—¹The story of Lord Vishnu assuming the human form as Lord Ram has been narrated in great detail by Lord Shiva himself in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Doha no. 191.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 53. Well, this was a great mystery for Parvati, and she expresses her doubts clearly in Doha no. 53 and its following verses herein below. She wondered: How can a crow be so enlightened and self-realised that even Garud, who is deemed to be the king of birds and one of the closest attendants of Lord Vishnu, would go and hear this divine story from the former? This story has been narrated and enjoyed by the greatest of sages, seers and saints, so how come a crow and other birds who are regarded as lowly creatures and are far lower in the rung of evolution as compared to intelligent humans, hear it, and if indeed it is the truth then where does Kaagbhusund live and how did he become so enlightened and blessed so as to be able to even enthrall you sufficiently enough so much so that you mince no words in praising him?]

दो०। बिरति ग्यान बिग्यान दूढ़ राम चरन अति नेह ।
बायस तन रघुपति भगति मोहि परम संदेह ॥ ५३ ॥

dōhā.

birati gyāna bigyāna dṛṛḥa rāma carana ati nēha.
bāyasa tana raghupati bhagati mōhi parama sandēha. 53.

[Uma or Parvati said to Lord Shiva—] ‘I have great doubts that a crow (who is a lowly creature by birth; here referring to Kaagbhusund) could ever be so highly blessed, enlightened and self-realised that he would possess such grand spiritual virtues as ‘Birati’ (or Vairagya; meaning renunciation and detachment from this gross world and having no interest in sense gratifications or desire to enjoy the sense objects of the world), ‘Gyan’ (enlightenment, wisdom, self-realisation), and ‘Vigyan’ (knowledge of the ‘Truth’ arrived at by analysis and research), alongside having firm and unwavering affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram.

Simultaneously having a physical body of a ‘crow’ and profound and the most refined form of ‘Bhakti’ (devotion) for Lord Raghupati (Ram) is strange and baffling for me, its something of a mystery for me, for such a thing to actually happen is unimaginable for my mind. [So, oh Lord, I request you to clarify the thing and remove my doubts.]¹ (Doha no. 53)

[Note—¹A crow is a meat-eating and dull-witted bird that is regarded as unholy and shunned by all. It’s a lowly birth for a creature and is regarded with contempt. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 5; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 1 which say that a crow is a despicable creature.]

चौ०. नर सहस्र महँ सुनहु पुरारी । कोउ एक होइ धर्म ब्रतधारी ॥ १ ॥
धर्मसील कोटिक महँ कोई । बिषय बिमुख बिराग रत होई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

nara sahasra maham̐ sunahu purārī. kō'u ēka hō'i dharma bratadhārī. 1.
dharmasīla kōṭika maham̐ kō'ī. biṣaya bimukha birāga rata hō'ī. 2.

{In these verse nos. 1-8, Parvati states the reason why she was so astonished that Kaagbhusund, though being a crow by birth, was so lucky as to be blessed with the spiritual nectar of having devotion (‘Bhakti’) for Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of the Supreme Lord of creation, because this was a rarest of rare privilege which even the great sages and seers were denied. Therefore, it was very difficult to imagine that a lowly creature such as a crow would be lucky enough not only to have access to this spiritual nectar but also being so erudite and expert in spiritual matters that his narration of the story of Lord Ram had extremely enchanted Lord Shiva who himself is highly enlightened, wise, a great devotee of Lord Ram, and the greatest of all the Gods.}

Parvati said to Lord Shiva, who is also known by the name of ‘Purari’—‘Listen Lord Purari¹! Amongst thousands of men, there are only a scarce few who follow and uphold the principles of ‘Dharma’ (i.e. who lead a life of piety marked by righteousness, probity, propriety, ethical behaviour, nobility of thoughts and conduct).
(1)

Among ten million living beings, there may be only one who restrains himself from indulgences in the pleasures of the sense objects of the world, who restrains his sense organs from seeking gratification, and who, therefore, is blessed with the grand virtue of renunciation, dispassion and detachment in a natural way². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva is known as “Purari” because he had slayed the demon named Tripura.

²In other words, it is very rare to have a natural sense of detachment from all attractions of this material world of sense objects; it is very difficult to develop a natural sense of total renunciation from all attachments with the world and abstain from seeking pleasures of the senses. It is extremely difficult to overcome the desire for self-gratification and seeking comfort for the sense organs from their respective objects in this material world. It is almost impossible to resist worldly temptations, and a desire for gratification and seeking pleasures. One may do so under religious compulsions or due to circumstances forced upon him, but to have these grand virtues of total and purest form of renunciation, detachment and dispassion in a ‘natural way’ is almost unimaginable for a living being who is naturally inclined to yield to the irresistible urge to serve his sense organs.]

कोटि बिरक्त मध्य श्रुति कहई । सय्यक ग्यान सकृत् कोउ लहई ॥ ३ ॥
ग्यानवंत कोटिक महँ कोऊ । जीवनमुक्त सकृत् जग सोऊ ॥ ४ ॥

kōṭi birakta madhya śruti kaha'ī. samyaka gyāna sakṛta kō'u laha'ī. 3.
gyānavanta kōṭika maham' kō'ū. jīvanamukta sakṛta jaga sō'ū. 4.

The Vedas assert that among crores (ten million) of souls who have freed themselves from worldly attachments (i.e. have renounced the world of material comforts and pleasures), there are only a few fortunate (or privileged, lucky) ones who have acquired wholesome and perfect spiritual wisdom. (3)

Amongst such millions of wise and enlightened souls, only a rare few are so lucky that they have attained ‘Jivan Mukti’ (or final freedom from all bondages and fetters that have tied their souls to this world and the body) even while they are alive¹. (4)

[Note—¹Such rewards of bliss, beatitude and felicity are usually got by a wise and enlightened person after his Atma, his soul, leaves the gross body at the time of his death. Such persons do find eternal peace and beatitude—but it is after they abandon their gross body and the gross world in which they live. But in some rare cases this becomes possible even while a person lives in this world, retains his body, and goes about his normal duties. Such persons are known as ‘Jivan Mukta’—i.e. they have attained spiritual freedom and liberation from all fetters that bind the soul to the body as well as the world even while they are alive and live a normal life like other creatures.

Mukti literally means freedom, liberation and deliverance. A related concept is Moksha which would mean ultimate emancipation and salvation. Both concepts are

almost identical in import vis-à-vis the creature's Atma is concerned. Mukti in the present context would mean freedom from delusions and ignorance about the truth that tie down the creature to this entrapping world and its attractions of material objects; to obtain liberation from the fetters of delusions and ignorance and thereby obtain deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death and their attendant miseries and torments. The creature erroneously thinks that the pleasures and comforts that the world gives are permanent and real, whereas the fact is just the opposite. This is the great delusion pertaining to this world which keeps everyone tied down to it. Once Gyan or truthful knowledge dawns on the mental horizon of the creature that he is being taken for a ride, either by becoming aware of this fact through the reading of the scriptures or by hearing about it when spoken of by some wise man, it is then that he embarks on the path of finding the truth himself and the way to break free from this shackle. The scriptures and other wise men show him the path, and finally he is successful in his spiritual quest. This is Mukti.

Basically there are said to be three types of Muktis—viz. Jivan, Videha and Kaivalya. The following list summarises the Upanishads that deal with these three varieties of Muktis.

(1) Jivan Mukti—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 18-33; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3; Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 12-13, and Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4, 6-15; Akchu-panishad, verse no. 32-39; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-32. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no. 5, and canto 3, verse no.9-11; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4/3-4; 2/3/6-7; 2/4/5-6; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 12 and 4-47; Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2. (c) Atharva Veda—Ram Rahasaya Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 11-17; Annapurna Upanishad, canto 2.

(2) Videha Mukti—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 33-81; Sarwasaro-panishad, verse no. 2; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 32-40. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no. 12, and Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15; Mahopanishad, canto 2, verse nos. 36-73, and canto 5, verse nos. 23-41.

(3) Kaivalya Mukti—It has been described in Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15.

(4) The three paths of Mukti have been described in Advai Tarak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 4-13.

A similar idea has been expressed by Lord Ram when he advised the saintly crow Kaagbhusund about the characteristics of those whom the Lord loves—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 86 which we will eventually read as we progress with the reading of this excellent book titled the “Kaagbhusund Ramayan”.]

तिन्ह सहस्र महँ सब सुख खानी । दुर्लभ ब्रह्मलीन बिग्यानी ॥ ५ ॥

धर्मसील बिरक्त अरु ग्यानी । जीवनमुक्त ब्रह्मपर प्रानी ॥ ६ ॥

सब ते सो दुर्लभ सुरराया । राम भगति रत गत मद माया ॥ ७ ॥

सो हरिभगति काग किमि पाई । बिस्वनाथ मोहि कहहु बुझाई ॥ ८ ॥

tinha sahasra mahum̐ saba sukha khānī. durlabha brahmalīna bigyānī. 5.
 dharmasīla birakta aru gyānī. jīvanamukta brahmapara prānī. 6.
 saba tē sō durlabha surarāyā. rāma bhagati rata gata mada māyā. 7.
 sō haribhagati kāga kimi pāī. bisvanātha mōhi kahahu bujhāī. 8.

Amongst such thousands of souls (as described in the foregoing verses), it is very rare to find a really wise and enlightened person who has attained self-realisation of the highest and purest form so much so that he not only realised (i.e. been acquainted with the reality of) Brahm (the Supreme Being) but has simultaneously merged his own ‘self’ with the ‘supreme Self’ that is the Absolute Reality of creation (and is known as ‘Brahm’). Such a person indeed becomes a treasury of all imaginable form of bliss, joy, beatitude and felicity¹. (5)

Now, even amongst those living beings who are (i) the followers of the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility of conduct and thought), (ii) those who have totally renounced the world and are detached from its materialistic charms, and are therefore known as ‘Virakta’, (iii) those who are wise and enlightened, and are thus honoured by the epithet of being a ‘Gyani’, (iv) those who are called ‘Jivan Mukta’ because they have freed themselves from all the fetters of the body and the world, and (v) those who have realised Brahm and have become truly ‘self-realised’ by merging their Atma with Brahm {as outlined in the foregoing verse nos. 1-5} (6)---

---Oh the Lord of the Gods (i.e. Lord Shiva)², it is rare and very difficult to find a person who is absolutely devoted to Lord Ram and committed to him, and is free from all the corrupting influences of such vices as vanity and wile represented by ‘Maya’ (delusions) and ‘Mada’ (ego, arrogance and haughtiness)³. (7)

[Parvati finally comes to the point. She expresses her surprise that a humble creature such as a crow named Kaagbhusund would be able to acquire this rarest of rare blessing of having ‘Bhakti’ or devotion for Lord Ram when this virtue is so rare and difficult to develop even by those who are highly enlightened and wise as she outlines herself in the foregoing verse nos. 1-7.]

Well then, oh the Lord of the world (“Vishwanaath”), please explain to me how did a humble crow (Kaagbhusund) have access to the rarest of rare spiritual virtue of having Bhakti for Lord Ram (when it is so difficult for even those who are highly wise and enlightened—or ‘Gyanis’, are ‘self-and-Brahm-realised’, and are ‘Jivan Mukta’)⁴. (8)

[Note—¹The inference is easy: it is not so difficult to acquire a theoretical knowledge of the Atma or soul, of who one’s ‘true self’ is, and to become wise and enlightened. But it is more difficult to actually become ‘self-realised’ in the true sense—because once this materialises, one would immediately realise that his ‘true self’ is nothing else but Brahm, the supreme Self or the cosmic Consciousness which is the Soul of the entire living creation. With this realisation, the differentiation between the individual soul and the universal Soul vanishes. This means that the individual transcends the limitations imposed by the grossness of the body and the world to rise above and become a cosmic entity like the Brahm, or the supreme Atma or the supreme Consciousness.

When this becomes a reality, the living being becomes a treasury of eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity that are the hall-marks of those who have realised their

‘true self’ as being Brahm, and not an individual who has a gross body affected by the countless problems of the equally gross world. Obviously, when all worrisome distractions are removed, when all the nagging problems associated with the body and the world in which this body lives are eliminated, happiness and joy comes naturally in abundance.

²We must remember that these verses refer to the conversation between Parvati and Lord Shiva. Parvati is here addressing her husband Lord Shiva when she says “Oh Lord of the Gods”.

³When one has acquired all the excellent qualities enumerated in the above verses, it is normal for a person to feel a sense of pride and achievement. He feels that he is a cut above the others; that is is a learned, a wise and enlightened man whom others show respect, and who is much sought after for spiritual guidance and advice on matters related to spiritualism and metaphysics as enunciated in the scriptures. Such persons think that they know all, and that there is no need for them to search anything more or anything else.

But they forget that though they might have attained bliss and happiness that comes with Brahm-realisation they have yet not tasted the nectar of spiritual bliss, exhilaration and ecstasy that comes with having the eclectic virtue of ‘Bhakti’ or having devotion and love for the Lord God. In their misplaced sense of fulfillment, they forget that they still lack something, that they are missing the essence of bliss, beatitude and felicity that they can have if they develop devotion for Lord Ram (the Lord God) in addition to their knowledge of Brahm.

Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram, the incarnate Brahm, is an added bonus that can be had for free, and which is like the tiara on the crown of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment.

Remember: We are talking about those persons who claim to have attained ‘Brahm’ and ‘Jivan Mukti’, and thus assert that they have obtained spiritual bliss. But if such persons have not developed ‘Bhakti’ for the living form of the same Brahm whom they claim to have realised, the form known as ‘Lord Ram’, then such persons are surely incomplete in their knowledge.

Thus, they cannot claim to be truly Brahm-realised or thoroughly enjoy the spiritual reward of bliss, beatitude and felicity. Without Bhakti for Lord Ram, the incarnate Brahm, something is missing from the whole.

⁴This group of verses highlight the superiority of having devotion—or Bhakti—for Lord Ram.

‘Bhakti’ is superior to the other five excellent qualities of a man: to follow Dharma (verse no. 1), to have Vairagya (verse no. 2), to possess Gyan (verse no. 3), to attain Jivan Mukti (verse no. 4), and obtain Brahm-realisation and oneness with Brahm, the Absolute (verse no. 5).

A similar doubt was raised by Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu and the legendary Eagle, when he came to Kaagbhusund to hear the recitation of Ram Charit Manas—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 94.

It ought to be noted here that the saintly crow Kaagbhusund had been blessed with the eclectic virtue of having Bhakti for Lord Ram from two sources: viz. (i) Lord Shiva himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes

Doha no. 30, and (ii) Kaagbhusund's Guru (preceptor) named sage Lomas—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 113.]

दो०. राम परायन ग्यान रत गुनागार मति धीर ।
नाथ कहहु केहि कारन पायउ काक सरीर ॥ ५४ ॥

dōhā.

rāma parāyana gyāna rata gunāgāra mati dhīra.
nātha kahahu kēhi kārana pāya'u kāka sarīra. 54.

He (the saintly crow Kaagbhusund) was an ardent devotee of Lord Ram and had committed his entire life to the Lord, was well-steeped in wisdom, was a treasury of knowledge, was highly enlightened, and was of a steady and resolute mind.

This being so, how come did he become a lowly creature such as a 'crow'; why did he get a lowly body of a crow (instead of being born as some higher member in the hierarchy of creation, such as a human being for example)? (Doha no. 54)

[Note—Garud has also raised this question when he went to hear the recitation of Ram Charit Manas from Kaagbhusund—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 94.

At that time, Kaagbhusund narrated to Garud the events of his past life which had resulted in his acquiring the body of a humble crow.

When asked by Garud why he loved this body of a crow, Kaagbhusund replied that it is because he had acquired Bhakti for Lord Ram with this body, and so he loved it more than any other form that his soul might have taken—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 95.]

चौ०. यह प्रभु चरित पवित्र सुहावा । कहहु कृपाल काग कहँ पावा ॥ १ ॥
तुम्ह केहि भाँति सुना मदनारी । कहहु मोहि अति कौतुक भारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

yaha prabhu carita pavitra suhāvā. kahahu kṛpāla kāga kham' pāvā. 1.
tumha kēhi bhāmṭi sunā madanārī. kahahu mōhi ati kautuka bhārī. 2.

Oh merciful Lord! Tell me from where did the crow (Kaagbhusund) get (i.e. have access to) this divine, sacred, fascinating and delightful story (of Lord Ram)¹? (1)

Further, oh the vanquisher of Kaamdeo², please tell me from where have you heard this wonderful story³? These questions have intrigued me, and I am very eager to know about the details. (2)

[Note—¹Parvati was surprised that Lord Ram's divine story, the glory and sacredness of which Lord Shiva never tires of praising as is evident in verse nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 52 hereinabove, could be known and fully understood by a 'crow' who is supposed to be lowly bird in the hierarchy of creation. It was very intriguing because even great sages and seers found it difficult to understand the great secrets of the

divine story of Lord Ram, complete with its intricate details, many variations, subtle messages and finer nuances. So how was it possible that a humble creature known as a ‘crow’ could become so enlightened about this story that even Lord Shiva was charmed by the former’s narration of it, had spent time hearing it in his hermitage, and had been exceptionally pleased (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 57 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 10).

The “Kaagbhusund Ramayan” was revealed as an answer that Lord Shiva gave to Parvati.

Parvati knew very well that Lord Shiva was deeply steeped in the knowledge of who Lord Ram was, and that he had always meditated by using Lord Ram’s holy Mantras and had focused his attention on the divine form of the Lord. She was a witness to it: she had been with Shiva when he stayed at the hermitage of sage Kumbhaj where the divine story of Lord Ram was narrated and thoroughly discussed with its manifold meanings, and then she had witnessed how Shiva had bowed reverentially and paid his obeisance to Lord Ram while the former was on his way to his abode in Mt. Kailash in the company of Parvati, and Lord Ram was wandering in the wilderness in search of his wife Sita who was abducted by the demon king Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 50.

At that time also Parvati was confused, and this had led to some unhappy events that culminated in Shiva forsaking her—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.

As it happened, in her next birth she asked Shiva to tell her the secret of Lord Ram’s divinity, and the story that Shiva told her came to be known as the famous epic “Ram Charit Manas” or the ‘Ramayana’. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113.

So, Parvati was finally convinced of the divine and sacred nature of Lord Ram’s story. But what confounded her was Lord Shiva picking up the crow named Kaagbhusund for so much lavish praise. She wondered how this was possible that a crow, of all the creatures, would be so highly enlightened and knowledgeable about Lord Ram’s story that Shiva, who is regarded as the wisest amongst the gods, would hold him in such high esteem.

She could not contain her inquisitiveness and asked Shiva to clarify.

²Lord Shiva had once burnt to death the god of passion, known as Kaamdeo (or Cupid), because the latter had attempted to disturb the Lord’s meditation at the behest of the other gods who had wanted to get Shiva married.

The word ‘*madanārī*’ in the text literally means one who destroyed the pride of Madan, another name of Kaamdeo, who was very proud of his ability to overcome a living being’s determination to practice self-restraint over his sense organs and desires for gratification by stoking the fire of passion, lust and desire that are inherently present in the heart of all creatures in this creation. He had tried his dirty tricks on Lord Shiva while he was deeply engrossed in meditation, and this had extremely annoyed the Lord so much so that the later opened his third eye said to be located on his forehead. This eye spewed blazing flames of fire symbolising Shiva’s wrath, and Kaamdeo was reduced to ashes.

Since then, Shiva has got another name, ‘*madanārī*’: one who vanquished the pride of Madan, the god of passion and lust. This story has been narrated in detail in

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 87.

³Parvati wondered two points: (i) One was from where her husband had heard this magnificent story of Lord Ram. Well, in her ignorance she forgot that she had accompanied him to the hermitage of sage Kumbhaj (Agastya) where this story was thoroughly discussed (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 48).

(ii) The other point was: ‘what were the circumstances which led Shiva to hear the story from Kaagbhusund, and what was so special with this story that he was so fascinated by it?’ This is answered by Shiva in the verses that follow (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 55—to Doha no. 57).]

गरुड़ महाग्यानी गुन रासी । हरि सेवक अति निकट निवासी ॥ ३ ॥
तेहिं केहि हेतु काग सन जाई । सुनी कथा मुनि निकर बिहाई ॥ ४ ॥

garuṛa mahāgyānī guṇa rāsī. hari sēvaka ati nikaṭa nivāsī. 3.
tēhim kēhi hētu kāga sana jāī. sunī kathā muni nikara bihāī. 4.

Garud, the legendary vehicle of Lord Vishnu, is a savant, a highly enlightened and learned one who is also a repository of all the good virtues. [How can one be sure of this? What is the reason for it? Well, it is because—] He is a servant of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu), and lives very close to the Lord (as Garud is a vehicle of Lord Hari, and must be available to the Lord at short notice)¹. (3)

This being the case, how come he (Garud) would prefer to go to a crow’s place to hear the narration of the divine story of Lord Ram instead of going to the hermitage of some wise and learned sage or seer?

[It’s amazing that Garud should choose to go to a crow to listen to the story of Lord Ram instead of picking some great saint or sage for this purpose. And, by all accounts, Garud was not a fool; he was very wise. So why did he prefer going to the crow Kaagbhusund’s place to hear Lord Ram’s story? I (Parvati) am unable to understand this mystery. So oh Lord, please explain it to me.] (4)

[Note—¹The simple logic is this: Had Garud not been exceptionally pure at heart, wise, enlightened, sincere and diligently devoted to Lord Hari, it would not have been possible for him to be in the Lord’s service in the first place. To be very close and dear to Lord Vishnu so much so that Vishnu depended on him for going anywhere is a rare privilege that wouldn’t have been available to Garud if he hadn’t possessed excellent qualities. Lord Vishnu wouldn’t have liked an unqualified creature to live so near and serve him so closely.

Garud is the mount or the vehicle of Lord Narayan or Vishnu. The word “Garud” means ‘one who flies with the help of wings’.

He is in the form of the legendary bird in the form of an Eagle or Heron. Garud stands for many things—such as speed and agility of the mind to move from one subject to another. Garud also symbolizes the spoken word. This is because spoken words are transmitted from one point to another by the medium of the sky just

like the bird flying from one tree to another. Words and ideas are transmitted from one person to the other like the bird flying off from one tree and perching on another. That is why speech is likened to a bird. Garud is regarded as a personification of the knowledge contained in the Vedas because this knowledge is transmitted through the means of speech. Besides this point, there is another way of looking at this aspect. The knowledge contained in the Vedas help a wise man to reach his spiritual destination much like Lord Vishnu employing the services of Garud if he wants to go any place. The eagle is known to have a long range of vision and flies high up in the sky. The Garud is able to have a broad perspective of the sight seen below because from its high perch in the sky. This indicates the virtues of Vishnu in having wider knowledge and broad vision of life as well as to remain aloof from the humdrum affairs of the deluding world below. The Garud is extremely fast and reaches its destination in a fraction of a second—indicating the almost instantaneous reach of the Lord in all the directions of the creation. Since the Gurud is able to fly it also stands for the imaginative abilities of the mind, and since it has a penetrating vision that sees long distances he stands for the sharp and wise intellect that has foresight and deep insight.

According to *Krishna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 24, Garud took up the form of the Indian Fig tree (known as Bhandir) during Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Krishna.

There is an Upanishad of the Atharva Veda that is dedicated to Lord Garud. It is called the *Garud Upanishad* and it is 31st Upanishad of this Veda. It has the Mantras of Garud which are said to possess great powers to overcome the killer effects of any kind of poison, especially those of snake bite.

The legend of Garud can be traced to the *Rig Veda*, 4.26-27, that says that a golden-winged huge eagle had brought the Soma (the juice of eternity and bliss) from the heaven.

According to the Adi-Parva of the epic '*Mahabharat*', Chapters 31-34, Garud was the son of sage Kashyap, the progenitor of all living beings, and his wife Vinataa. She had become a slave of Kadru, another wife of Kashyap, due to a curse. So Garud liberated his mother Vinataa from this curse by bringing Amrit (nectar of deliverance) from heaven.

According to the story of the *Ramayana*, both the Valmiki version and Goswami Tulsidas' version, Garud came to the battle-field during the epic battle of Lanka when Lord Ram and others had been ensnared by huge serpents that tied them down like long sturdy ropes. These serpents were actually a metamorphosed form of the mysterious weapon known as the 'serpent missile' shot by Meghnad (also known as Indrajit), the son of Ravana, the king of the demons and the ruler of Lanka. Since the eagle is a known enemy of serpents, so as soon as Garud appeared on the battle-field, all the serpents either fled in terror or were gobbled up by Garud. This freed Lord Ram. This was a great service that Garud did for his Lord—because Ram was none else but Lord Vishnu in a human form. Refer: (i) Valmiki Ramayan, Yudha Kand, Chapter 50; and (ii) Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 73—to Doha no. 74 ka.

In iconography, he is depicted as a divine human with two outstretched strong wings behind his two arms. When Lord Vishnu rides on the back of Garud like one would ride a horse, Garud holds the feet of the Lord, which dangles on either side of his body, with his hands.

The colour of Garud's body is depicted as white or emerald according to different versions in the scriptures.]

कहहु कवन बिधि भा संबादा । दोउ हरिभगत काग उरगादा ॥ ५ ॥
गौरि गिरा सुनि सरल सुहाई । बोले सिव सादर सुख पाई ॥ ६ ॥

kahahu kavana bidhi bhā sambādā. dō'u haribhagata kāga uragādā. 5.
gauri girā suni sarala suhā'ī. bōlē siva sādara sukha pā'ī. 6.

Tell me about the dialogue that was exchanged between the two devotees of Lord Hari, i.e. the 'crow' (Kaagbhusund) and the 'eagle who devours serpents' (i.e. Garud)¹. (5)

Hearing these words of Gauri (one of the many names of Shiva's wife Parvati), words that were pleasant to hear and expressed her honest desire to learn and know more about Lord Ram and his divinity, Lord Shiva felt pleased and happy².

He (Shiva) said (replied)— (6)

[Note—¹Garud is a devotee of Lord Vishnu, whose other name is Hari. Similarly, Kaagbhusund, the crow, is also a great devotee of Lord Vishnu who had taken a human form of Lord Ram. In other words, the conversation that proceeded between these two great birds must be really interesting as they had a common thread of devotion between them. It is just like two great philosophers, two great musicians, two great scientists, or for that matter any two great souls who are well-established in their own field of knowledge meeting each other. The discussion between any such two persons is sure to be highly enlightening and thought-provoking for all those who are interested in that particular field of study.

Now therefore, since I (Parvati) am eager to learn about the truth of Lord Ram and the greatness of the Lord, since I am fascinated by your (Shiva's) own devotion and dedication for Lord Ram and the sacred story of the Lord you have narrated to me, and especially the way you have praised Kaagbhusund and have said that Garud, who was highly enlightened and very close to Lord Vishnu but had been overcome with delusions, found his peace when he went to hear the discourse about Lord Ram from Kaagbhusund, I am sure that this dialogue between the two great birds, Kaagbhusund and Garud, would be extremely interesting and enlightening. So, I want to hear about it.

What were the circumstances that made Garud deluded, why did he choose to go to Kaagbhusund to clear his doubts, and what did Kaagbhusund tell Guard that removed his delusions and doubts, and regain his peace of mind? I want to hear everything in detail. So please, oh Lord, tell me the entire episode.

²Shiva sensed honesty and sincerity in Parvati's enquiry. There was no deceit in her words. She was curious to know why and how Garud, the wise bird who was very close to Lord Vishnu and thus supposed to be well acquainted with the Lord's greatness, supremacy and divinity, should become doubtful and need advice. And even in case he did, why would he go to a crow to remove his doubts instead of other learned sages and seers.

Shiva could judge Parvati's sincerity by her facial expressions and words, and he was convinced that she had a genuine desire to know the facts and hear the discourse that Kaagbhusund gave for Garud. So he decided to tell her everything as it

happened. Otherwise, had he sensed any deceit in her, it is certain he would have said ‘no’.]

धन्य सती पावन मति तोरी । रघुपति चरन प्रीति नहिं थोरी ॥ ७ ॥
 सुनहु परम पुनीत इतिहासा । जो सुनि सकल लोक भ्रम नासा ॥ ८ ॥
 उपजड़ राम चरन बिस्वासा । भव निधि तर नर बिनहिं प्रयासा ॥ ९ ॥

dhan'ya satī pāvana mati tōrī. raghupati carana prīti nahim thōrī. 7.
 sunahu parama punīta itihāsā. jō suni sakala lōka bhrama nāsā. 8.
 upaja'i rāma carana bisvāsā. bhava nidhi tara nara binahim prayāsā. 9.

[Being glad at Parvati's enquiry as it would give him another opportunity to narrate the divine and sacred story of his beloved Lord Sri Ram, something that gladdened his heart more than anything else, Shiva said cheerfully—]

‘Sati, you be blessed! You are really fortunate to have a purified mind that has enabled you to have the eclectic virtues of devotion, affection and love for the holy feet of Lord Raghupati (Ram, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty, the Supreme Lord of creation in a human form) that is not little. [That is, your affection and devotion for the holy feet of the Lord is not at all less than what I expected from you. You are blessed as you have an abundance of these spiritual virtues in you, and so you are a fit person to whom this marvellous story can be told. I am very happy at this!]¹ (7)

So, listen to this holiest of holy and most sacred history (“itihāsā”) (known as Ram Charit Manas or the Ramayana), hearing which the entire web of one's worldly delusions and misconceptions (about the Supreme Lord's human form) are eliminated². (8)

As a result of hearing of this sacred story, faith and trust in the holy feet of Lord Ram is kindled in one's heart, and this helps a man (i.e. all persons, irrespective of gender, caste and creed) to cross this huge ocean-like world very easily and without making any special effort for it³. (9)

[Note—¹It has been said that the sacred story of Lord Ram should not be told to someone who is not interested to hear it or who dislikes it in any manner. It is not meant for the undeserving, or for the uninterested. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 39; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 128.

²Well, Parvati's mind was earlier infected by this delusion. That was the primary reason why Lord Shiva had abandoned her in her previous birth as Sati (refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57).

So, Shiva alludes to this phase of her life. He means to say that one of the reasons why he would repeat the story once again is that it would help to scrub clean any trace of negativity or delusions that may still linger on in Parvati's mind. This would ensure that the cleansing is complete and final.

³This mortal, gross world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death with its accompanying horrors and uncertainties is compared to an ocean because they are similar in nature in a metaphoric way. The roaring ocean with its huge life-threatening waves, its churning whirlpools of death, its ferocious marine creatures that can kill and devour anyone whom they manage to lay their hands upon and grab, and its seemingly endless expanse that one feels one would never cross to find the other side of its shore, is as fearsome and horrifying as the mortal world with its grinding cycle of horrifying miseries and an endless chain symbolising birth and death.

So how does one cross an ocean? Surely 'on a sturdy boat or ship' that has an expert navigator. Likewise, Lord Ram's divine story acts as a time-tested ship that helps a person to find deliverance from this world and have eternal peace; it helps the soul reach its destination easily and with the least trouble. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 53 which is explicit on this subject.

The glories of Lord Ram's story and its potential to give liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32.]

दो०. ऐसिअ प्रस्न बिहंगपति कीन्हि काग सन जाइ ।

सो सब सादर कहिहउँ सुनहु उमा मन लाइ ॥ ५५ ॥

dōhā.

aisi'a prasna bihaṅgapati kīnhi kāga sana jā'i.

sō saba sādara kahiha'um̐ sunahu umā mana lā'i. 55.

A similar enquiry was made by the king of birds (i.e. Garud) when he went to the crow (Kaagbhusund)¹. I (Shiva) shall tell you (Parvati, also known as Uma) that episode with due respect².

Oh Uma, listen attentively. (Doha no. 55)

[Note—¹What was this 'similar enquiry'? Just like Parvati being astonished that a humble crow could be so blessed that he was chosen by Lord Shiva for lavishing of so much praise because of his ability to describe the sacred story of Lord Ram that was so exceptionally charming that it had enamoured even Shiva's heart and mind, Garud had also wondered how come a lowly bird such as a crow could be so highly enlightened, self-realised and learned that Lord Shiva would advise him (Garud) to go to this crow, instead of any other great sage and seer, to remove his grave doubts and overcome his delusions about the authenticity of Lord Ram. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 94 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

Surely there was something special about the crow known by the name of Kaagbhusund. More than the desire to hear the divine story of Lord Ram being narrated, it was the desire to unravel the mystery of Kaagbhusund that Garud had stayed on in the former's hermitage after hearing the story of Lord Ram so that he could enquire about Kaagbhusund's personal life.

It should be noted that Garud has acknowledged that all his doubts had been removed after coming to Kaagbhusund's hermitage and hearing the story of Lord

Ram from him (refer—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 68 ka; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 93; and (iii) Doha no. 94 kha).

Likewise, Parvati was also amazed by Kaagbhusund as is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 55.

²Shiva is about to re-tell the divine story of his beloved Lord Ram, and so it is something sacred that he will speak of. Therefore he tells Parvati that what he is about to narrate is done with reverence and due respect. This mark of respect is as much for the story of Lord Ram as it is for the narrator, sage Kaagbhusund, the crow, from whom he (Shiva) had heard the story himself.

Why do we conclude that Shiva ‘re-told this story’? Because he has already narrated the entire story to Parvati once as is clear from Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 6-7 that precede Doha no. 52. So, when Parvati asked Shiva some questions pertaining to the discussion between Garud and Kaagbhusund, Shiva decided to ‘re-tell’ the story to her to satisfy her query and remove all remaining traces of doubts from her mind.]

चौ०. मैं जिमि कथा सुनी भव मोचनि । सो प्रसंग सुनु सुमुखि सुलोचनि ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

mairṁ jimi kathā sunī bhava mōcani. sō prasaṅga sunu sumukhi sulōcani. 1.

Lord Shiva replied—‘Oh my dear (Parvati or Uma) who has a lovely face and enchanting eyes! Now I shall tell you the episode when I came to hear this story (of Lord Ram), a divine story which has the mystical potential to destroy the trap created by this world of misery and delusions (thereby granting both mental as well as spiritual happiness, peace and bliss to the listener). (1)

प्रथम दच्छ गृह तव अवतारा । सती नाम तब रहा तुम्हारा ॥ २ ॥
दच्छ जग्य तव भा अपमाना । तुम्ह अति क्रोध तजे तब प्राणा ॥ ३ ॥
मम अनुचरन्ह कीन्ह मख भंगा । जानहु तुम्ह सो सकल प्रसंगा ॥ ४ ॥

prathama daccha gr̥ha tava avatārā. satī nāma taba rahā tumhārā. 2.
daccha jagya tava bhā apamānā. tumha ati krōdha tajē taba prānā. 3.
mama anucaranha kīnha makha bhaṅgā. jānahu tumha sō sakala prasaṅgā.
4.

In your first life (or birth), you had been born as the daughter of Daksha Prajapati. At that time your name was “Sati”. (2)

In the religious sacrifice of Daksha, you had been insulted, which made you peeved and very angry. Unable to bear the insult, you had discarded your life (i.e. had died by burning yourself in fire). (3)

(When I came to learn about it, I was infuriated, and—) My followers went and destroyed the sacrifice to punish the perpetrators of your insult. This story is well known to you.¹ (4)

[Note—¹This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chauapi line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 65.]

तब अति सोच भयउ मन मोरें । दुखी भयउँ बियोग प्रिय तोरें ॥ ५ ॥
सुंदर बन गिरि सरित तड़ागा । कौतुक देखत फिरउँ बेरागा ॥ ६ ॥

taba ati sōca bhaya'u mana mōrēm. dukhī bhaya'um' biyōga priya tōrēm. 5.
sundara bana giri sarita tarāgā. kautuka dēkhata phira'um' bēragā. 6.

I was very sad and remorseful at this unfortunate development. Oh dear, I was miserable due the grief of separation from you¹. (5)

In order to pass my time and find mental peace, I used to wonder here and there like a detached mendicant. I used to roam, watching beautiful forests, mountains, rivers and lakes. (6)

[Note—¹When Sati died, Lord Shiva was overwhelmed with grief. The reason for this sadness of his heart is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 77 which says to the effect that “though Lord Shiva is inherently dispassionate and detached, yet he was full of remorse (when Sati died) because one of his devotees, in this case his consort Sati, had suffered due to his separation from her, and had also died due to an insult inflicted on the Lord by her father”.

Shiva had earlier voluntarily decided that he will have nothing to do with Sati, will have no contact with her because she had assumed the form of Sita, the wife of Lord Ram whom Shiva worships. It was an unethical action on the part of Sati, something Shiva could not forgive. So, soon after Sati assumed the form of Sita, Lord Shiva mentally abandoned her. Sati could feel the indifference that her husband Shiva had developed towards her. This pained her much. She thought to herself, ‘I am sincerely sorry for my stupid actions. But that does not mean I do not love Shiva. I can’t live without him. Oh Lord God—please let me die. And if I am honestly devoted to Lord Shiva then please bless me that in my new birth I may serve my dear Lord once again.’ Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 59 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow this Doha; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65.

So, in the current verses Lord Shiva addresses this secret thought in her mind—whether or not he loved Uma inspite of her sins in the past life. Shiva wished to convey the message to her that in the intervening period from her death and her reunion with him, he had been very sad and had been remembering her all the time. It was to overcome his grief that he wondered from place to place.]

गिरि सुमेर उत्तर दिसि दूरी । नील सैल एक सुंदर भूरी ॥ ७ ॥

तासु कनकमय सिखर सुहाए । चारि चारु मोरे मन भाए ॥ ८ ॥
 तिन्ह पर एक एक बिटप बिसाला । बट पीपर पाकरी रसाला ॥ ९ ॥
 सैलोपरि सर सुंदर सोहा । मनि सोपान देखि मन मोहा ॥ १० ॥

giri sumēra uttara disi dūrī. nīla saila ēka sundara bhūrī. 7.
 tāsu kanakamaya sikhara suhā'ē. cāri cāru mōrē mana bhā'ē. 8.
 tinha para ēka ēka biṭapa bisālā. baṭa pīpara pākārī rasālā. 9.
 sailōpari sara sundara sōhā. mani sōpāna dēkhi mana mōhā. 10.

During one of those wonderings I reached a beautiful mountain that had a blue hue. It is called “Neel Giri” (the Blue Mountain), and it is situated further north from Mt. Sumeru (which is golden in its hue and is said to be the terrestrial abode of gods). (7)

The Neel Giri had four beautiful and simmering golden summits. It looked very charming and pleased my mind. [Since I was in search of peace, this attractive site lured me and I went there.] (8)

Each of these summits had one huge tree each, viz. a Vat tree (the banyan tree), a Pipar tree (the bo-tree; the long-pepper tree), a Paakar tree (the Indian fig tree), and a Rasaal tree (the mango tree). (9)

A wonderful lake too existed on the top of the mountain. It had gem-studded steps. This composite sight enthralled my mind and gladdened my heart (and I decided to spend some time there). (10)

दो०. सीतल अमल मधुर जल जलज बिपुल बहुरंग ।
 कूजत कल रव हंस गन गुंजत मंजुल भृंग ॥ ५६ ॥

dōhā.

sītala amala madhura jala jalaja bipula bahuraṅga.
 kūjata kala rava hansa gana guṅjata maṅjula bhr̥ṅga. 56.

That lake had clean, cool and sweet water. There were plentiful flowers, especially the lotus flower, of different colours that bloomed in and around it.

There was a lot of pleasant noise made by beautiful swans (that floated majestically on its water) murmuring sweetly, as well as by the bees that hummed melodiously over the flowers. (Doha no. 56)

चौ०. तेहिं गिरि रुचिर बसइ खग सोई । तासु नास कल्पांत न होई ॥ १ ॥
 caupāī.

tēhim giri rucira basa'i khaga sōī. tāsu nāsa kalpānta na hōī. 1.

On (the top of) that charming mountain lived the “Bird” (a reference to the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund) who will not perish (die) even when the Kalpa (i.e. one

cycle of creation) comes to an end. [That is, Kaagbhusund is immortal like the gods.]¹
(1)

[¹Lord Ram had himself blessed Kaagbhusund with eternity in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88.

Refer also to Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 94; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 96.]

माया कृत गुण दोष अनेका । मोह मनोज आदि अबिबेका ॥ २ ॥
रहे ब्यापि समस्त जग माहीं । तेहि गिरि निकट कबहुँ नहिं जाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

māyā kṛta guṇa dōṣa anēkā. mōha manōja ādi abibēkā. 2.
rahē byāpi samastā jaga māhīm. tēhi giri nikaṭa kabahum̃ nahīm jāhīm. 3.

All the countless types of faults, taints and shortcomings that are created by 'Maya' (delusions) and are closely associated with this mundane and mortal world, such as 'Moha' (attractions and attachments for the world and its material objects), 'Manoj' (passions and lust) etc.--- (2)

---All such faults have spread throughout this world, but they never go near this holy mountain. [It is out of bounds for them. So therefore, the atmosphere of the place was exemplarily holy, spiritual and blissful.] (3)

तहँ बसि हरिहि भजइ जिमि कागा । सो सुनु उमा सहित अनुरागा ॥ ४ ॥
पीपर तरु तर ध्यान सो धरई । जाप जग्य पाकरि तर करई ॥ ५ ॥
आँब छाँह कर मानस पूजा । तजि हरि भजनु काजु नहिं दूजा ॥ ६ ॥
बर तर कह हरि कथा प्रसंगा । आवहिं सुनहिं अनेक बिहंगा ॥ ७ ॥

taham̃ basi harihi bhaja'i jimi kāgā. sō sunu umā sahita anurāgā. 4.
pīpara taru tara dhyāna sō dhara'ī. jāpa jagya pākari tara kara'ī. 5.
ām̃ba chām̃ha kara mānasa pūjā. taji hari bhajanu kāju nahīm dūjā. 6.
bara tara kaha hari kathā prasaṅgā. āvahīm sunahīm anēka bihaṅgā. 7.

Now I shall describe to you how the Crow (Kaagbhusund) lived and worshipped Lord Hari (Vishnu) there. Uma, listen to it attentively and with great reverence (because it is about a holy soul and a holy place). (4)

He used to do 'Dhyan' (meditation, reflection and contemplation) under the shadow of the Pipar tree (the bo-tree; the long-pepper tree). Under the Paakar tree (the Indian fig tree), he used to do Japa (repetition of holy name of the Lord God) and Yagya (fire sacrifices). (5)

In the shadow of the mango tree he used to worship 'Manas', the holy book that describes the divine story of Lord Ram (who was an incarnation of the Supreme Lord on earth in the form of a human). Excepting worshipping Lord Hari and spending his

time in devotion for the Lord, he had no other thing to do. [To wit, Kaagbhusund spent his time entirely on Lord Hari, remembering him and doing his service. He was totally devoted to the remembrance of the Lord.] (6)

Under the shadow of the Vat tree (the banyan tree), he used to regularly tell the divine stories related to Lord Hari¹. Many birds came there to hear him. (7)

[Note—¹The word “Hari” here clearly refers to Lord Ram because it is said in verse no. 6 that Kaagbhusund used to worship the holy book called “Manas” under the mango tree. This “Manas” is the book that describes the life and deeds of Lord Ram. In fact, both the terms “Hari” and “Ram” refer to the same Lord Vishnu because Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and Hari is one of the many names of Vishnu.

This conclusion is endorsed by the next verse no. 8 which explicitly says that Kaagbhusund preached the story of Lord Ram.

Kaagbhusund straddled all the four divisions of the cycle of creation known Sat Yug, Treta Yug, Dwapar Yug and Kali Yug. The entire one cycle of creation is symbolically represented in one day of his life. This is how:-

The characteristics of the four Yugs are written in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-4. It says that (i) during Sat Yug, the best way for spiritual evolvment and obtaining religious merit was to do Dhyan (meditation, reflection and contemplation); (ii) in Treta Yug, it was doing Yagya (fire sacrifice); (iii) in Dwapar Yug one was required to worship the holy feet of Lord Ram; and (iv) in Kali Yug the only way is to remember the Lord and repeat his holy name.

We find that Kaagbhusund did all these during the course of his day.]

राम चरित बिचित्र बिधि नाना । प्रेम सहित कर सादर गाना ॥ ८ ॥

सुनहिं सकल मति बिमल मराला । बसहिं निरंतर जे तेहिं ताला ॥ ९ ॥

जब मैं जाइ सो कौतुक देखा । उर उपजा आनंद बिसेषा ॥ १० ॥

rāma carita bicitra bidhi nānā. prēma sahita kara sādara gānā. 8.
sunahim sakala mati bimala marālā. basahim nirantara jē tēhim tālā. 9.
jaba maim jā'i sō kautuka dēkhā. ura upajā ānanda bisēṣā. 10.

Lord Ram’s story which describes the Lord’s deeds and life is very fascinating, strange and wonderful. He (Kaagbhusund, the saintly Crow) sang it soulfully and with the greatest of devotion in different ways. [The story of Lord Ram’s divine life is heart-touching and soul-stirring, and it made Kaagbhusund so emotional and sentimental that his narration assumed the form of a devotional song, a hymn that he sang with an ecstatic heart and an overwhelmed mind that god submerged in emotions of love and devotion for the Lord. He sang like a lark, exhilarated and cheerful.] (8)

All those who had a purified mind and intellect listened to it. And those who listened to it had their mind and intellect purified.

In this way, the saintly Crow always lived near that holy lake. [That is to say, he never went anywhere else.] (9)

When I went there and saw this unique spectacle, my heart was full of intense happiness and bliss; I was overjoyed. [I was searching for such an environment where I can find peace of mind, where I can spend some time living in a pleasant surrounding and hear the divine story of my beloved Lord Ram being narrated with full devotion. I found all these requirements fulfilled there, so I decided to stay there for some time.] (10)

दो०. तब कछु काल मराल तनु धरि तहँ कीन्ह निवास ।
सादर सुनि रघुपति गुन पुनि आयउँ कैलास ॥ ५७ ॥

dōhā.

taba kachu kāla marāla tanu dhari taham̃ kīnha nivāsa.
sādara suni raghupati guna puni āya'um̃ kailāsa. 57.

[I did not want to attract attention, so—] I disguised my self as a Swan and lived there for some time, reverentially listening to the divine story of Lord Raghunath (i.e. Lord Ram who was the Lord of the Raghu dynasty of Ayodhya) being narrated there.

After some time, I returned to Mt. Kailash. (Doha no. 57)

चौ०. गिरिजा कहेउँ सो सब इतिहासा । मैं जेहि समय गयउँ खग पासा ॥ १ ॥
अब सो कथा सुनहु जेहि हेतू । गयउ काग पहिं खग कुल केतू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

girijā kahē'um̃ sō saba itihāsā. mair̃ jēhi samaya gaya'um̃ khaga pāsā. 1.
aba sō kathā sunahu jēhi hētū. gaya'u kāga pahir̃ khaga kula kētū. 2.

Oh Girija (the daughter of the king of mountains; Parvati)! I have told you the entire history of the time when I had gone to the crow.

[That is, I have told you why I had gone to the hermitage of Kaagbhusund to hear this marvellous story of Lord Ram, and I have also told you where it is located and how Kaagbhusund preaches there.] (1)

Now, listen to that story which narrates the circumstances why the king of the bird-race, who is the most exalted amongst them (i.e. Garud, the Eagle, who is the mount of Lord Vishnu and deemed to be the senior most bird), went to the crow (named Kaagbhusund). (2)

जब रघुनाथ कीन्ह रन क्रीड़ा । समुझत चरित होति मोहि ब्रीड़ा ॥ ३ ॥
इंद्रजीत कर आपु बँधायो । तब नारद मुनि गरुड़ पठायो ॥ ४ ॥

jaba raghunātha kīnhi rana krīṛā. samujhata carita hōti mōhi brīṛā. 3.
indrajīta kara āpu bam̃dhāyō. taba nārada muni garuṛa paṭhāyō. 4.

When Lord Ram (“Raghunath”, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty of Ayodhya) was enacting the sport of waging a war (in Lanka, where the Lord had gone to fight with the demon army and their king Ravana who had abducted Sita, Ram’s chaste wife), a sport (or action) of the Lord which makes me feel ashamed¹ (3)---

---He had got himself (i.e. allowed himself to be) tied by the snare that Indrajeet (“the conqueror of Indra, the king of gods”; he was the son of Ravana) had used to trap the Lord². At that time, the celestial sage Narad had sent Garud to free the Lord from the bondage. (4)

[Note—¹Why was Shiva ‘ashamed’? Lord Shiva knew that Lord Ram was the Supreme Being in a human form. Shiva worshipped Lord Ram and used the latter’s holy name as the Mantra (a divine formula) while meditating. He knew that Lord Ram could do what he wanted by his mere wish. So, Lord Ram getting ensnared by serpents, even the thought that the Lord had voluntarily allowed himself to be tied by humble serpents, or that he was subdued by his rival in a conflict when Shiva knew very well that Lord Ram was invincible and supreme in this creation—was something unthinkable and unpalatable for Shiva.

Shiva had wished, hoped and expected that Lord Ram would use his supreme authority and stupendous powers that he possessed to overcome his rivals on the battle-field of Lanka. But instead, Shiva found that Lord Ram was behaving like ordinary mortals, and unlike the characteristic valour of the race he belonged to (i.e. the Kshatriya race as well as the mighty Raghu race of Ayodhya, which never accepts or even knows the meaning of the words defeat and subjugation by an enemy), the Lord had meekly surrendered before his rival Indrajeet. Shiva felt let down; he did not agree mentally to this decision of Lord Ram to allow himself to be trapped by serpents as it gave a wrong signal to all those who were observing the developments in the battle-field that Lord Ram was weak and could be defeated and subjugated.

Shiva feared that in the long run this will encourage all the enemies of the gods and holy people to create problems for them—because they would think that Lord Vishnu, who had manifested as Lord Ram for the exclusive purpose of protecting the gods and holy people from the torments of demons, could be overcome and defeated easily. This incident would scar the reputation of the Lord that he is invincible and the supreme protector of the entire creation—because if he can’t protect himself from getting trapped by serpents, then obviously his abilities and powers are limited.

Getting subdued by his enemy in the battle-field by allowing himself to be tied by the serpent-weapon would create a negative impression about the supremacy and invincibility of Lord Ram in the eyes of the world. For, only a few wise ones would know the reality of why Lord Ram was behaving in this ordinary way of a human prince, while the rest of the world would take things at face value and begin to doubt the supremacy and authority of Lord Ram.

To understand Shiva’s shame, let us take an example. Suppose a teacher has a favourite student of whom he is proud—for his knowledge, for his skills, for his wisdom, for his acumen, abilities and strength of character. Then one day in a great college debate where there is a huge audience watching closely, his favoured student lets him down by behaving ridiculously foolish, keeping silent when he knows the answers of the questions asked or the points raised by his competitors, leading to his defeat in the debate and failure to gain any recognition. What would happen to this teacher? He would be completely dejected, demoralised, crestfallen and heart-broken.

Would not he be? Whereas he had expected his student to shine in the gathering and bring laurels to his mentor, he had brought only infamy and shame to him!

Shiva had tried to convince his wife Sati about the divinity and supremacy of Lord Ram as the Lord of the World in a human form when she was confused about the his reality when she had observed her husband Shiva bowing and paying his respects to Lord Ram when the latter was wandering in the forest in search of his lost wife Sita. Sati was not convinced inspite of Shiva's best attempts to enlighten her about who Lord Ram actually was. She wondered that if what Shiva claims Lord Ram to be, that the 'Lord is all-knowing and the supreme Lord of creation', then how come he does not know where his wife Sita was or who has stolen her? This eventually had led to Shiva abandoning her when she dared to take the form of Sita to test if Lord Ram would recognise who she actually was, that she was not his wife Sita but was Sati, the consort of Shiva, if he was the all-knowing Lord of the World as Shiva claimed him to be. This episode is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 59.

Now, Shiva had to tell Parvati that Lord Ram was trapped by serpents! First it was Lord Ram roaming in the wild forest searching for his wife, and now it is the Lord falling prey to his rival's weapon. Obviously, this was a matter of regret and shame for Shiva that once again he would have to repeat the cycle of trying to convince Parvati about the supremacy of Lord Ram in the light of the latter's very ordinary deeds of a human being which went contrary to Shiva's claims of the Lord's divine and supreme nature.

²This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 73 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 10-13; and (ii) Doha no. 74 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 10.]

बंधन काटि गयो उरगादा । उपजा हृदयँ प्रचंड बिषादा ॥ ५ ॥

प्रभु बंधन समुझत बहु भाँती । करत बिचार उरग आराती ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu bandhana samujhata bahu bhāmṭī. karata bicāra uraga ārātī. 6.
bandhana kāṭi gayō uragādā. upajā hṛdayam̐ pracaṇḍa biṣādā. 5.

Garud, the one who devours snakes, had easily cut-off all the shackles of the Lord (which consisted of serpents that were magically formed from an arrow shot by Indrajeet specifically with this purpose in mind). After accomplishing his task successfully, Garud went back (to heaven). But this incident left him totally baffled, confused and dejected; a terrible unease compounded by doubts had sprouted in his heart that made him depressed and confounded. He was severely dejected on watching his Master (because Lord Ram was an incarnation of Vishnu) being humiliated in the battle-field. (5)*

When Garud, who creates terror in the serpents (uraga ārātī), recalled the way the Lord (Sri Ram) was tied in a snare, he was very upset mentally and began to ponder over the matter in various ways, being extremely baffled by what he had observed¹. (6)

[¹Why was Garud so extremely confused and baffled? The reason for Garud feeling so at Lord Ram being ensnared by serpents, which amounted to his subjugation by the demon named Indrajeet, was the same as what led Sati, the wife of Shiva, being confused about the supremacy of Lord Ram when she saw the latter wandering in the forest searching for his lost wife Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51.

Even the wise and exalted sage Vasistha, who was the son of the creator Brahma and the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya, had been confused about the truth of Lord Ram though he was explicitly told about it by the Creator himself. In the beginning, Vasistha had refused to accept the job of priesthood as it was not a noble profession, but when his father Brahma explained to him that this would give him an opportunity to serve the Supreme Lord of the world, he had accepted it. But still he became confused about who Ram actually was. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Doha no. 49.

Then we have the instance of Kaagbhusund himself who became perplexed about the reality of Lord Ram whom he saw playing in the palace courtyard like ordinary human child. To convince him, Lord Ram had shown him his cosmic all-encompassing vast form. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 77—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83.

So there is no wonder that Garud got deluded and utterly vexed when he saw Lord Ram getting tied by the snare of serpents in the battle-field. Till this incident Garud was convinced that his Lord, Vishnu, was the supreme Authority of the world, and as such the Lord was invincible and superior to everyone else. Garud had never seen Vishnu defeated and so meekly surrendering to his adversaries earlier in life. Garud also knew that Lord Vishnu had come down to earth as Lord Ram. But what he witnessed today—that Ram could not free himself from snares, that he could be shackled in the first place, was quite contradictory to the character of Vishnu. So, Garud was absolutely confounded. He was severely dejected on watching his Master, the supreme Lord of creation, being humiliated in the battle-field in such a meek way. Refer: Doha no. 58 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 herein below.

It ought to be noted here that it was Lord Shiva who had become instrumental in showing the truth about Lord Ram to both his wife Parvati and to Garud. Shiva had narrated the story of Lord Ram in its entirety to his wife Parvati so that her lingering doubts are removed. In the case of Garud, it was Shiva who had directed him to the hermitage of the crow Kaagbhusund so that Garud could hear the narration of the story and overcome his doubts. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 60—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 62.

As to the question ‘why did Shiva tell Garud to go to Kaagbhusund instead of telling the Lord’s story himself?’, Shiva answered this question himself when he said that ‘he did it because it is easier for a bird to understand the language of another bird’. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 62.

*But why did all this drama happen? The answer is given by Lord Ram himself. He tells Sita, before she was abducted by Ravana, that he (Ram) had to play some game in order to fulfil his mission for which he (Vishnu) had come down to earth. The aim was to plant Sita (who was Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu) in Lanka, the capital of the demon race, so that Lord Ram would find an excuse to go there and eliminate the cruel demons in their own fortress. Why there? Because all the cruel and wildly

sinful demons who needed to be eliminated, would assemble at one single place, and then it would be easy and practical to rid them en masse.

But for that to happen, Lord Ram and Sita would have to act a part in a drama—and this part was that they would have to expertly behave like ordinary human beings so that the demons are misled and can be trapped! Otherwise, if they and their king Ravana realise who Lord Ram actually was, they will flee and escape somewhere to hide themselves. If this happens, the entire exercise of Vishnu coming to the earth and taking birth as a human prince known to the world as ‘Ram’ would be completely defeated. This is clearly narrated in: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 24.]

व्यापक ब्रह्म बिरज बागीसा । माया मोह पार परमीसा ॥ ७ ॥

सो अवतार सुनेउँ जग माहीं । देखेउँ सो प्रभाव कछु नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

byāpaka brahma biraja bāgīsā. māyā mōha pāra paramīsā. 7.

sō avatāra sunē'um̐ jaga māhīm̐. dēkhē'um̐ sō prabhāva kachu nāhīm̐. 8.

[The reason for Garud's doubts is now narrated—] He wondered, ‘The Lord is said to be Brahm personified who is all-pervading and all-encompassing, is beyond emotions and passions, is the Lord of speech, is the Supreme Authority in creation and the Almighty Lord of all, including Maya (the power that created delusions) itself, is transcendental and the Supreme Lord of all. (7)

I have heard that this Lord has manifested himself in this world (as Lord Ram). But what I witnessed in the battle-field today is not at all compatible with the form and the power and the authority of the Lord as I know about him. I did not see any of his stupendous cosmic powers or astounding glories anywhere today¹. (8)

[Note—¹See note appended to Doha no. 58 herein below.]

दो०. भव बंधन ते छूटहिं नर जपि जा कर नाम ।

खर्ब निसाचर बाँधेउ नागपास सोइ राम ॥ ५८ ॥

dōhā.

bhava bandhana tē chūṭahim̐ nara japi jā kara nāma.

kharba nisācara bāmdhē'u nāgapāsa sō'i rāma. 58.

A man gets freedom from the bonds of this mortal world of transmigration by repeating the Lord's holy name, how is it possible that the same divine and almighty Lord would get tied down by an ordinary snare of serpents created by a lowly demon? (Doha no. 58)

[Note—¹Garud says: “This is why I am utterly confused as to the truth of the matter: who is Ram in reality? Is he an ordinary human prince, or is he indeed the Supreme Being in his form? If Lord Ram is indeed the almighty Lord I am told about, then it is

ridiculous and incongruous to even imagine that he would allow himself to get tied down by a snare of serpents from which he could not free himself, and for which purpose I was directed by sage Narad to help free him by gobbling the serpents so that the snare breaks. It's absurd and the two notions don't add up—it's either that Lord Ram is not the Supreme Being I think him to be, or there is something more than what meets the eye."

Later on in the narration we shall read that this specific query in the mind of Garud has been addressed and explained by his preacher Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 73. Here, Kaagbhusund clarifies to Garud that Lord Ram is indeed Brahm personified as he knows him to be, so let there be no confusion on this point. But the Lord plays his maverick tricks in various ways to fill his devotees with joy, and also that the Lord has to assume different forms and do many kind of odd deeds to suit the requirement of the circumstances and demands of the time.

Since the world is ever-changing and evolving, no two circumstances or times are alike, and therefore no two manifestations and activities of the Lord would be the same, though of course he himself is un-changing.]

चौ०. नाना भाँति मनहि समुझावा । प्रगट न ग्यान हृदयँ भ्रम छावा ॥ १ ॥

खेद खिन्न मन तर्क बढ़ाई । भयउ मोहबस तुम्हरिहि नाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nānā bhānti manahi samujhāvā. pragata na gyāna hṛdayam̐ bhrama chāvā.

1.

khēda khinna mana tarka baṛhāī. bhaya'u mōhabasa tumharihim̐ nāī. 2.

Garud tried his best to reassure himself and avoid confusions, but he did not succeed as wisdom did not dawn upon his mind and his heart remained covered by the shadow of doubts and delusions. (1)

He felt very remorseful and regretted the developments. The more he thought of it, the more confused he became. Indeed, he too became overwhelmed by delusions and confusions like you had been subjected to earlier¹. (2)

[¹The story of Parvati's delusion that Lord Shiva cites has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 56.]

ब्याकुल गयउ देवरिषि पाहीं । कहेसि जो संसय निज मन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥

सुनि नारदहि लागि अति दाया । सुनु खग प्रबल राम कै माया ॥ ४ ॥

byākula gaya'u dēvariṣi pāhīm̐. kahēsi jō sansaya nija mana māhīm̐. 3.

sunī nāradahi lāgi ati dāyā. sunu khaga prabala rāma kai māyā. 4.

Being extremely upset and perplexed, Garud could not find peace. So, in order to calm himself and remove the cause of his perplexity, he went to seek advice from the celestial sage Narad and told him all about whatever was causing him confusion¹. (3)

When Narad heard what Garud said and found him indignant and agitated condition, he felt pity and sympathy for him. So he told Garud—‘Listen oh king of birds! Lord Ram’s Maya is very formidably powerful and forceful². (4)

[Note—¹What was causing Garud so much confusion and vexation? It was the sight of Lord Ram, whom Garud knew to be his almighty Lord Vishnu in a human form, getting ensnared by snakes and feeling helpless in the battle-field of Lanka. Garud naturally didn’t expect the all-powerful Lord to behave so helplessly like an ordinary human and allow himself to be humiliated by a demon, Meghanad or Indrajeet, the son of the demon king Ravana, who had managed to capture the Lord by his serpent-weapon. This has been narrated herein above from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 2 that follow this Doha.

²The concept of Maya will be explained to Garud later on by the crow saint Kaagbhusund in detail. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 117.

It is the nature of a saintly person that when he sees someone in misery he feels sympathy and pain for the sufferer. Earlier in the story there is a narration of how Narad felt pity for Jayant, the wicked son of Indra, who had assumed the form of a crow and had bitten Sita somewhere on her body to test the might of her husband Lord Ram. At that time Lord Ram had shot a blade of grass to symbolise a headless arrow at him, and Jayant went through all the places in heaven and elsewhere to hide but this arrow pursued it relentlessly. Seeing certain death facing on his face, Jayant had approached Narad because this saint was sure to give him some advice that would help him overcome the horror he faced. When Narad saw Jayant in utter distress, he had felt sorry for him and pitied his condition. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 2.]

जो ग्यानिन्ह कर चित अपहरई । बरिआई बिमोह मन करई ॥ ५ ॥

जेहिं बहु बार नचावा मोही । सोइ ब्यापी बिहंगपति तोही ॥ ६ ॥

jō gyāninha kara cita apahara'ī. bari'ā'īm bimōha mana kara'ī. 5.
jēhim bahu bāra nacāvā mōhī. sō'i byāpī bihaṅgapati tōhī. 6.

It (the Maya) is so overriding and powerful that it steals (i.e. stupefies and dulls) the faculty of reasoning and thought even in those who claim to be wise, realised and enlightened (“Gyani”). Not only that, this Maya forces ‘Moha’ (infatuation, attraction and attachment with the grosser aspects of this world)¹. (5)

It has made me dance to its tune on more than one occasions². Oh king of birds, it is the same Maya that has engulfed you and blinded your mind. [That is, you have

become deluded, and that is why your mind is unable to think and rationalise anything.] (6)

[Note—¹The persons who are enlightened and self-realised are not expected to be attracted to the gross material world or seek pleasure and comfort from it, and neither are they expected to gratify the urges of the organs of their body. But Maya is so powerful a force in Nature that if it casts its shadow on such wise men, they fall from their exalted stature and begin to behave like utter ignorant people who are on a roller coaster ride of delusions and its associated problems in this world.

The power of Maya to delude even great sages and seers has been reiterated elsewhere also—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70.

²Narad had suffered the powerful blow of Maya. He had been overcome by passion and lust, getting so infatuated with a beautiful girl that he wanted to marry her. When Lord Vishnu saw his passionate condition and decided that it was not good for Narad, the Lord prevented him from marrying. This infuriated Narad and he cursed Lord Vishnu. Of course he lamented and regretted later on, but the damage had been done. This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 138.]

महामोह उपजा उर तोरें । मिटिहि न बेगि कहें खग मोरें ॥ ७ ॥

चतुरानन पहिं जाहु खगेसा । सोइ करेहु जेहि होइ निदेसा ॥ ८ ॥

mahāmōha upajā ura tōrēm. miṭihi na bēgi kahēm khaga mōrēm. 7.
caturānana pahim jāhu khagēsā. sō'i karēhu jēhi hō'i nidēsā. 8.

Oh Bird (Garud)! Great Delusion (“Maha Moha”) has taken root in your heart (i.e. it has found a firm foothold in your heart), and it will not be so easily uprooted (removed; eradicated) by any words of mine. (7)

So it will be advisable for you to go to the four-headed creator Brahma (who is the wise old patriarch of this creation, the senior-most God and the creator of the Vedas, and as such he is the most competent Authority to give you correct guidance in this matter). Go to him and tell him everything that’s worrying you, and then follow his instructions which would be for your own good¹.’ (8)

[Note—¹Brahma was consulted by the gods and others whenever they needed advice because he is the patriarch of creation, the old grandfather of this creation, and regarded as most experienced, knowledgeable and most competent to give correct advice as he had created the Vedas, the ancient scriptures.

When the demons had been tormenting and terrorising the earth and the gods, at that time also they had gone to Brahma to seek his advice—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha no. 184 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4.]

दो०. अस कहि चले देवरिषि करत राम गुन गान ।

हरि माया बल बरनत पुनि पुनि परम सुजान ॥ ५९ ॥

dōhā.

asa kahi calē dēvariṣi karata rāma guna gāna.
hari māyā bala baranata puni puni parama sujāna. 59.

After having advised Garud in the aforesaid manner (as narrated in the previous verses), the wise and enlightened celestial sage Narad went ahead on his way while repeatedly praising the glories of Lord Raghunath (Sri Ram) and recalling in his mind the wondrous effects of the delusory powers of Lord Hari (i.e. Sri Ram) that have no bounds and the fascinating way it affects a creature¹. (Doha no. 59)

[Note—¹Narad himself had a bitter experience of the Lord's delusion-creating powers when he was led astray from his spiritual path of austerity and penance by becoming enchanted by the beauty of a girl whom he longed to marry inspite of being a learned celestial sage who had taken a vow of celibacy. At that time, Narad was so infatuated with that lady that when Lord Vishnu threw a spanner in the wheel and prevented Narad from falling into the honey-trap laid by Maya (i.e. by the Lord's delusion-creating powers), the sage became so infuriated with the Lord that he had cursed him to become a human and suffer the agony of separation from his beloved. This curse by-and-by resulted in Lord Vishnu assuming the human form of Lord Ram and wondering in the forest in search of his wife Sita who was stolen by the demon king Ravana as narrated in the well-known story of the epic Ramayan.

This incidence is narrated in fine detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 139.]

चौ०. तब खगपति बिरंचि पहिं गयऊ । निज संदेह सुनावत भयऊ ॥ १ ॥

सुनि बिरंचि रामहि सिरु नावा । समुझि प्रताप प्रेम अति छावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

taba khagapati biran̄ci pahim̄ gaya'ū. nija sandēha sunāvata bhaya'ū. 1.
suni biran̄ci rāmahī siru nāvā. samujhi pratāpa prēma ati chāvā. 2.

Then (upon receiving sage Narad's advice) Garud, the king of the birds, went to the Creator ("biran̄ci"; Brahma) and narrated to him his confusions and doubts¹. (1)

When the Creator heard what Garud said, he bowed his head reverentially to Lord Ram as a mark of showing respect to the Lord's great powers and majesty. Realising the Lord's might and glory, the Creator was overwhelmed with love and affection for the Lord (Sri Ram). (2)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that Garud is being referred to as the "King of Birds"—"khagapati". The very fact that Garud still regarded himself as being a 'king of birds' inspite of being overcome with confusions and doubts that surely do not behove of a king as they undermine a king's level of wisdom, intelligence and confidence, shows that he was arrogant and proud. This is why Garud had neither bowed to sage Narad

while taking leave of him earlier, nor did he bow now to Brahma, the Creator, who was like his great-grandfather.

So Brahma marvelled at the might of the Lord's Maya, the fantastic delusions that it creates that had pulled the rug from under the feet of Garud now, and Narad earlier. It is indeed remarkable that Maya did not spare even Garud who was so close to Lord Vishnu, being his mount and always at the Lord's beck-and-call. It had similarly not spared Narad who was the Lord's favourite devotee. Therefore Brahma became alert and immediately bowed his head to Lord Ram so that Maya spares him from the same fate as suffered by these two individuals, for had Brahma not done so it would be tantamount to his being arrogant and proud himself, and thus be an easy prey for the maverick tricks of Maya!]

मन महँ करइ बिचार बिधाता । माया बस कबि कोबिद ग्याता ॥ ३ ॥
हरि माया कर अमिति प्रभावा । बिपुल बार जेहिं मोहि नचावा ॥ ४ ॥

mana mahum̐ kara'i bicāra bidhātā. māyā basa kabi kōbida gyātā. 3.
hari māyā kara amiti prabhāvā. bipula bāra jēhim mōhi nacāvā. 4.

The Creator mused within himself thus: 'Maya has influenced and dominated even the learned sages, seers and enlightened souls (i.e. it spares none)¹. (3)

Indeed and in all sooth, the powers of Maya are so profound that it has not even spared me and had made dance to its tunes many a times². (4)

[Note—¹Refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 62; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70; and Doha no. 118 Ka.

²Brahma is a wise and learned senior God. When he found that Garud was overcome by the Lord's Maya, he felt sympathy for him and wanted to help him out of his predicament. The lesson here is that when learned and wise seniors in the society observe that someone is behaving in a particular odd manner, they should not get angry at him but be patient with him, and try their best to understand the reason for the odd behaviour and help that person by giving him proper, relevant and practical advice like Brahma had done with Garud.]

अग जगमय जग मम उपराजा । नहिं आचरज मोह खगराजा ॥ ५ ॥
तब बोले बिधि गिरा सुहाई । जान महेस राम प्रभुताई ॥ ६ ॥

aga jagamaya jaga mama uparājā. nahim ācaraja mōha khagarājā. 5.
taba bōlē bidhi girā suhāī. jāna mahēsa rāma prabhutāī. 6.

The entire animate as well as inanimate world has been created by me (Brahma), and since Maya has often been able to mislead even me there is no wonder and great surprise in that it had overcome Garud, the king of birds, as well.'

[To wit, if Maya can delude the patriarch of creation who is supposed to be the wisest of all the creatures and most learned amongst them, there is nothing astonishing in Maya overcoming the wisdom of a ‘bird’ such as Garud was.] (5)

Thinking thus, the Creator spoke sweet words to Garud, words that seemed pleasant and soothing (i.e. auspicious and harbingers of good)¹.

He told Garud: ‘See, Lord Shiva (“Mahesh”; the Great God—“Maha + Ish”) is fully enlightened about Lord Ram’s glories, authority, majestic powers and divinity. (6)

[Note—¹The words of Brahma were good advice for the welfare of Garud, were given in good faith, were in praise of Lord Ram as well as Lord Shiva, and were spoken with politeness and empathy. Hence, they were auspicious and sweet to hear.]

बैनतेय संकर पहिं जाहू । तात अनत पूछहु जनि काहू ॥ ७ ॥

तहँ होइहि तव संसय हानी । चलेउ बिहंग सुनत बिधि बानी ॥ ८ ॥

bainatēya saṅkara pahim jāhū. tāta anata pūchahu jani kāhū. 7.
tahaṁ hō’ihi tava sansaya hānī. calē’u bihaṅga sunata bidhi bānī. 8.

Oh the Son of Vintaa (“bainatēya”—i.e. Garud)! Therefore, you should go to Lord Shiva (“saṅkara”) (to get your problems resolved). But my dear (“tāta”), I request you not to ask anyone anything anywhere else (and go straight to Shiva, lest you would be more confounded than what you are at present)¹.

[To wit, no one is more competent and qualified to answer your queries about the divine reality and the truth about Lord Ram than Lord Shiva is. So don’t be waylaid by self-professed wise men or gods whom you may encounter on your way, but head straight to Lord Shiva. Pay heed to my advice, for otherwise you will land yourself in a far worse situation than you find yourself at present.] (7)

There, at Lord Shiva’s place, your doubts and confusions would be dispelled, and the Lord would be able to guide you properly and on the right path.’

Hearing these words of the Creator, the Bird started off immediately for Shiva’s place². (8)

[Note—¹The lesson to be learnt here is that when one faces a problem in life, the wise thing to do is not sit over it but find someone who can give true, honest and friendly advice. Then, one must pay heed to it, and not go to the market advertising his problems as there would be so many ‘advisors’ around who would exploit his anxiety and mental confusions to suit their own agenda by proffering advice and solutions that do more good to the vested interest of such advisors than to the troubled man himself. So therefore, one should first research some good teacher or advisor, and head straight to him.

²Once again we note that Garud has not payed obeisance to Brahma by bowing before him at the time of leaving him for Shiva’s place. Besides the fact that Garud was under the influence of Maya that had made him arrogant and haughty, Maya had also overshadowed his mind and prevented him from thinking rationally and in an orderly

way. Garud had even forgotten the basics of courtesy and proper behaviour by at least saying a 'thank you' to Brahma or Narad. He just gate-crashed on them and went away as if he was intoxicated, throwing all norms of politeness and decency to the wind!]

दो०. परमातुर बिहंगपति आयउ तब मो पास ।
जात रहेउँ कुबेर गृह रहिहु उमा कैलास ॥ ६० ॥

dōhā.

paramātura bihaṅgapati āya'u taba mō pāsa.
jāta rahē'um' kubēra gṛha rahihu umā kailāsa. 60.

Lord Shiva told Parvati, his consort, 'Then (after Brahma advised him to come straight to me to resolve his mental doubts regarding the truth and reality of Lord Ram, something that had so perplexed Garud), the king of birds (Garud) came to me anxiously and full of distress. At that time I was on my way to Kuber's place, while you were here at Mt. Kailash. (Doha no. 60)

चौ०. तेहिं मम पद सादर सिरु नावा । पुनि आपन संदेह सुनावा ॥ १ ॥
सुनि ता करि बिनती मृदु बानी । प्रेम सहित मैं कहेउँ भवानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tēhiṁ mama pada sādara siru nāvā. puni āpana sandēha sunāvā. 1.
suni tā kari binatī mṛdu bānī. prēma sahita mairṁ kahē'um' bhavānī. 2.

He (Garud) first bowed his head reverentially at my feet¹ and then told me about his doubts and confusions. (1)

Oh Bhavani (one of the many names of Parvati, the consort of Shiva)! When I heard his prayers and sweet words asking me to help him solve his riddle, I too responded to him in the like manner, politely and sweetly, and told him --- . (2)

[Note—¹Garud has bowed his head for the first time now, before Lord Shiva. Earlier he had neither done so before sage Narad nor before Brahma. This is because by this time he had realised that both Narad and Brahma may have not liked his arrogant behaviour and so they did not welcome him warmly and help him by answering his queries though both of them were competent and qualified enough to do so. They simply waved him off to someone else to show their annoyance towards him.

So Garud now thought that if he behaved in the same irreverent way with Lord Shiva and gets a cold-shoulder treatment from the Lord, then he would be neither here nor there. So he acted prudently now and showed courtesy to Shiva by bowing his head before him.]

मिलेहु गरुड़ मारग महँ मोही । कवन भाँति समुझावौं तोही ॥ ३ ॥

तबहिं होइ सब संसय भंगा । जब बहु काल करिअ सतसंगा ॥ ४ ॥

milēhu garura māraga maham' mōhī. kavana bhām'ti samujhāvaum' tōhī. 3.
tabahim' hō'i saba sansaya bhaṅgā. jaba bahu kāla kari'a satasaṅgā. 4.

“Oh Garud! You have met me on the way, and so how can I properly explain things to you now. [This is because one needs to sit down quietly and patiently to concentrate on the topic to be discussed and contemplate on any serious matter, to teach and understand something. It can't be done in a hurry while one is on the road to somewhere he is going.] (3)

Anyway, I will not disappoint you; I will try to help you. It appears to me that your doubts and confusions would be dispelled only when you have a company of saints and wise souls for quite some time. [To wit, the proper remedy for the sort of problem you face is the company of saints and holy people. The reason is outlined below. So I will direct you to such a place and be sure your spiritual needs would be taken care of.] (4)

सुनिअ तहाँ हरि कथा सुहाई । नाना भाँति मुनिन्ह जो गाई ॥ ५ ॥

जेहि महुँ आदि मध्य अवसाना । प्रभु प्रतिपाद्य राम भगवाना ॥ ६ ॥

sunī'a tahām' hari kathā suhā'ī. nānā bhām'ti muninha jō gā'ī. 5.
jēhi mahum' ādi madhya avasānā. prabhu pratipādyā rāma bhagavānā. 6.

When you stay at such a place (i.e. in the company of saintly souls) for a long time, you would be able to hear on a regular basis the divine story of Lord Hari as it is narrated by diverse sages and seers in as many diverse ways, with its many variations and connotations. [The general ambience of such places is conducive to mental peace and spiritual well-being, and when you abide there for some time your perplexities and restlessness would subside.] (5)

In these narrations (of the many hues of the Lord's divine stories), the chief Lord who is being praised and honoured by all and who is the main theme of such discourses—from the beginning, through the entire narration till its end—is no other Lord God but Lord Ram himself¹. (6)

[Note—¹On the face of it there appears to be so much diversity and variations in the deities and gods who are being praised and honoured and shown respect to by the sages and saints during their discourses and discussions. But it must be fully remembered and properly understood that all of them are the same Lord God known as 'Ram' who is being invoked in all these many forms and the many roles that the Lord plays. It's the same Truth and Reality seen through differently coloured glasses.

The benefit of attending such congregation where a wise saint narrates the divine story of the Lord is that he explains the story in such a simple way as to be understood by all; both the learned and the laity are able to grasp the essence.]

नित हरि कथा होत जहँ भाई । पठवउँ तहाँ सुनहु तुम्ह जाई ॥ ७ ॥
जाइहि सुनत सकल संदेहा । राम चरन होइहि अति नेहा ॥ ८ ॥

nita hari kathā hōta jaham̃ bhā'ī. paṭhava'um̃ tahām̃ sunahu tumha jā'ī. 7.
jā'ihi sunata sakala sandēhā. rāma carana hō'ihi ati nēhā. 8.

So therefore, I am sending you to such a place where Lord Hari's divine stories are narrated on a daily basis. You go there and listen to them. (7)

By attentively listening to these divine narrations all your doubts and confusions (about Lord Ram) would be dispelled, and you will be blessed by having profound love and affection (as well as devotion) for the holy feet of Lord Ram. (8)

दो०. बिनु सतसंग न हरि कथा तेहि बिनु मोह न भाग ।
मोह गएँ बिनु राम पद होइ न दूढ़ अनुराग ॥ ६१ ॥

dōhā.

binu satasaṅga na hari kathā tēhi binu mōha na bhāga.
mōha ga'ēm̃ binu rāma pada hō'i na dr̥ṛha anurāga. 61.

[Lord Shiva observed thus:-] One cannot hear discourses and talks related to Lord Hari (the Lord God; Lord Vishnu) without the company of saints and holy men, and without hearing such divine discourses or talks it is not possible for anyone to get rid of spiritual ignorance and delusions¹.

And without elimination of delusions and ignorance one cannot develop abiding affection and devotion for the august feet of Lord Ram (which would pave the way for a person attaining eternal bliss and peace—called the 'Shanti Pada', the state of existence marked by blessedness, beatitude and felicity, a state-of-being or a state-of-existence that makes a man fulfilled in all respects). (Doha no. 61)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 69.

In this cited verses it has been emphasised that the opportunity to have communion with saints is possible by the grace of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. मिलहिं न रघुपति बिनु अनुरागा । किँ जोग तप ग्यान बिरागा ॥ १ ॥
उत्तर दिसि सुंदर गिरि नीला । तहँ रह काकभुसुंड़ि सुसीला ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

milahim̃ na raghupati binu anurāgā. ki'ēm̃ jōga tapa gyāna birāgā. 1.
uttara disi sundara giri nīlā. taham̃ raha kākabhusuṇḍi susīlā. 2.

[Lord Shiva further advised Garud as follows—] Lord Ram, who is also known as "Raghupati, the Lord of the Raghu kings", is not to be found or accessed except by

having true virtues of love and affection for the Lord God even if one practices a lot of Yoga (meditation), Tapa (austerity and penance), Gyan (acquisition of knowledge of the scriptures and become learned) or Vairagya (renunciation)¹. (1)

There is such a place in the northern direction where there is a beautiful and pleasant mountain known as Neel Giri (literally, the “blue mountain”). On it lives a courteous saint known by the name of “Kaagbhasund”². (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the only one and simple way to the Lord God is the path of love and devotion for him. Here, Lord Shiva has quietly warned Garud to remember this one simple formula if he wishes to know who Lord Ram actually is—and it is to have true love and devotion for the Lord. For otherwise, no matter how hard he tries, the access to the truth of the Lord would always elude him, and he would always be denied the real spiritual benefit that one gets by worshipping the Lord.

²He was a crow, a “kaag”, by body, and the reason why he became a ‘crow’ has been explained by the saint himself when Garud too wished to know about it during his interaction with him. This is narrated later on in this Book, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 94—to Doha no. 114.]

राम भगति पथ परम प्रबीना । ग्यानी गुन गृह बहु कालीना ॥ ३ ॥

राम कथा सो कहइ निरंतर । सादर सुनिहिं बिबिध बिहंगबर ॥ ४ ॥

rāma bhagati patha parama prabīnā. gyānī guna gr̥ha bahu kālīnā. 3.
rāma kathā sō kaha'i nirantara. sādara sunahim bibidha bihaṅgabara. 4.

[Praising Kaagbhusund, Lord Shiva told Garud—] He is highly conversant with the path of devotion for Lord Ram and is deemed to be an expert in it. He is wise, learned and enlightened. He has excellent virtues and character. And is an aged saint who has practiced what he preaches for a long time, and so is immensely qualified on the subject he teaches (which is love and devotion for Lord Ram that leads to spiritual bliss and beatitude and fulfilment, and how to overcome all delusions associated with life in this world)¹. (3)

He (Kaagbhusund) narrates the divine story of Lord Ram regularly (in a variety of ways, explaining it from different angles and perspectives so that it is easy to understand by all). Many birds of varying denominations and feathers listen to this discourse with great reverence and devotion². (4)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva wished to assure Garud that the person to whom he is being sent is not an ordinary one, and Garud should not be misled by his physical appearance of a ‘crow’. It was very important to convince Garud on this point—for Shiva realised that Garud would treat Kaagbhusund intuitively with contempt and disdain when he finds him to be mere ‘crow’. Garud had already told Shiva that both Narad and Brahma had refused to instruct him themselves. So Shiva concluded that there must surely something wrong with Garud that Narad and Brahma, who were both fully qualified to preach him, had decided to evade him. Perhaps it was because Garud was haughty of his being a “king of birds”. So it was imperative for him to know the

reality of Kaagbhusund, for otherwise there were fair chances that he would insult this sage also when he finds out that he was a ‘crow’.

²Shiva warned Garud to discard his ego of being a ‘king of birds’ when he approaches the hermitage of Kaagbhusund. He will find all sorts of birds listening to the divine story of Lord Ram, and he should act humbly and be patient. He must not expect them to treat him like a king is treated in his royal court, because Garud is attending a spiritual discourse and not his royal court while he stays in the hermitage of Kaagbhusund. He must not expect any special treatment.]

जाइ सुनहु तहँ हरि गुन भूरी । होइहि मोह जनित दुख दूरी ॥ ५ ॥
मैं जब तेहि सब कहा बुझाई । चलेउ हरषि मम पद सिरु नाई ॥ ६ ॥

jā'i sunahu taham̐ hari guna bhūrī. hō'ihī mōha janita dukha dūrī. 5.
mair̐m jaba tēhi saba kahā bujhā'ī. calē'u haraṣi mama pada siru nā'ī. 6.

So go there and listen attentively to the narration of the divine glories and greatness of Lord Hari (i.e. Sri Ram), and by doing so your perplexities and sorrows having their origin in confusions and delusions would disappear.” (5)

[Lord Shiva told Parvati—] When I had thus advised Garud in the aforesaid manner and explained all the things to him, he felt relieved and glad in his heart. Then he bowed his head before my feet and cheerfully went his way. (6)

ताते उमा न मैं समुझावा । रघुपति कृपाँ मरमु मैं पावा ॥ ७ ॥
होइहि कीन्ह कबहुँ अभिमाना । सो खोवै चह कृपानिधाना ॥ ८ ॥

tātē umā na mair̐m samujhāvā. raghupati kṛpām̐ maramu mair̐m pāvā. 7.
hō'ihī kīnha kabahum̐ abhimānā. sō khōvai caha kṛpānidhānā. 8.

{Now, Lord Shiva explains to Parvati, his consort who is called Uma here, why he himself had not taught Garud the truth of Lord Ram though he was competent to do so.}

Oh Uma! I had not explained anything to Garud myself because by the grace of Lord Ram I had an intuitive feeling [7] that he (Garud) must have exhibited his ego, arrogance and pride on some previous occasion, and the merciful Lord wished to make him (Garud) lose or be freed of these negative traits present inside him [8]¹. (7-8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram does not wish to make his devotee spiritually suffer in any way. In his primary form Lord Ram is known as the cosmic Lord Vishnu, and Garud is his celestial vehicle or mount. Garud is very a close attendant and confidant of the Lord, and therefore it is unimaginable that the Lord would punish him by making him suffer physically. But at the same time it is obligatory upon the Lord to ensure that those who are close to him have no spiritual taints in their inner-selves. Ego, pride,

arrogance and haughtiness are never thought of as good qualities. Since Garud had them, the Lord decided to get rid of them altogether.

What was wrong with Garud? He thought that he was a ‘king’ of the bird class of creatures, that he was superior to others for being too close to the Lord God, and one who is especially privileged by the virtue of his close association with the Supreme Lord himself. The Lord wanted to teach him a lesson—that the only quality that matters with the Lord is devotion and love for him, and not one’s pedigree or physical strength or appearances or outwardly show. No amount of service pleases the Lord as much as having undiluted love, affection and devotion for him does.

When Garud would eventually discover that a humble creature as an ordinary crow who is usually treated with disdain and contempt by one and all, is so exalted that Lord Shiva himself praised him in fluent tongue, that this crow was also blessed by Lord Ram himself as we shall read in due course, that this crow was so enlightened and wise that a time comes when the “king of bird” is obliged to approach him with some prayer, and the fact that all the birds hold him in high esteem out of their natural affection and respect for him, and not by the virtue of his pedigree or designation as was the case with Garud who was shown respect by the community of birds just because he was the ‘king of birds’ and the ‘celestial Eagle’ who is regarded as the best-by-birth amongst all the birds—it is sure that Garud’s sense of false pride and ego would be crushed.

This fact was intuitively discovered by the wise Lord Shiva. He determined that Lord Ram wishes that Garud should go to a ‘crow’ to get knowledge so that his ego and pride are crushed. So therefore Lord Shiva decided not to preach Garud himself, but send him to Kaagbhusund instead.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 74 where Kaagbhusund has told Garud that Lord Ram does not like his devotee to have any trace of pride, ego or arrogance inside him, and should these negative traits somehow find entry in the heart and mind of the devotee, the Lord ensures that he is got rid of them as soon as possible.] (7-8)

कछु तेहि ते पुनि मैं नहिं राखा । समुझइ खग खगही कै भाषा ॥ ९ ॥

प्रभु माया बलवंत भवानी । जाहि न मोह कवन अस ग्यानी ॥ १० ॥

kachu tēhi tē puni maim̐ nahim̐ rākhā. samujha'i khaga khagahī kai bhāṣā. 9.
prabhu māyā balavanta bhavānī. jāhi na mōha kavana asa gyānī. 10.

Another reason why I didn’t keep him with me to explain things to him and remove his doubts and delusions (about Lord Ram’s reality) is that it would be easier for a bird to understand another bird’s language in a better way than what he would be able grasp if I had preached him myself. (9)

Indeed and in all sooth, oh Bhavani (Parvati), the Lord’s Maya (i.e. his delusion creating powers) is so mightily formidable that there is no one so wise and enlightened as to be beyond its reach and dominance. (10)

दो०. ग्यानी भगत सिरोमनि त्रिभुवनपति कर जान ।

ताहि मोह माया नर पावँ करहिं गुमान ॥ ६२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

gyānī bhagata sirōmani tribhuvanapati kara jāna.
tāhi mōha māyā nara pāvam̐ra karahim̐ gumāna. 62 (a).

One should understand the gravity of the situation and realise the majestic and overriding powers of Maya to create delusions and confusions that it did not permit even Garud—who is regarded as an enlightened soul, one who is the most exalted amongst the devotees of the Lord, and was also the mount (or the vehicle) of the Lord of the Three Worlds (i.e. Lord Vishnu who is the Lord of the Universe), a designation that always kept Garud in close proximity of the Lord of Maya himself—to escape its grasp, so it is highly incongruous and ridiculous for others (even those who pride themselves for their knowledge, as well as the ordinary creatures) to think that they are immune to the effects of Maya. (Doha no. 62-a)

सिव बिरंचि कहँ मोहइ को है बपुरा आन ।

अस जियँ जानि भजहिं मुनि माया पति भगवान ॥ ६२ (ख) ॥

siva biran̐ci kahum̐ mōha'i kō hai bapurā āna.
asa jiyam̐ jāni bhajahim̐ muni māyā pati bhagavāna. 62 (b).

The Lord's delusion-creating powers known as Maya has enthralled, enchanted and captivated even the most exalted and enlightened of souls such as Lord Shiva and the creator Brahma, say then what do ordinary creatures count against its powers and authority?¹

Keeping this fact in mind, wise sages, seers and hermits worship and pay their obeisance to the 'Lord of this Maya'². (Doha no. 62-b)

[Note—¹No one is beyond the reach of Maya. No one can claim immunity from its effects; no one can say that he or she is not affected by Maya. If Maya can cast its magical spell on Garud, Brahma the creator, Lord Shiva the concluder and the most enlightened amongst the Gods, and sage Narad who is one of the dearest devotees of Lord Vishnu, what hope do others have to escape the clutches of Maya?

²This is because Maya would automatically be constrained and would think twice before disturbing these saints, sages, seers and hermits as its mischievous acts would annoy the Lord himself because these noble souls have devotion for the Lord, they worship and pay their obeisance to him. Maya is like a maid of the Lord, and therefore it just cannot afford to do anything that goes against the wishes of its Lord.

This fact has been explained in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 116 ka.]

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The Kaagbhusund Ramayan Or The Aadi Ramayan

(Based on 'Ram Charit Manas' of Goswami Tulsidas)

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes]

THE STORY & ITS TEACHINGS

PART—1

[Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Doha no. 69.]

चौ०. गयउ गरुड़ जहँ बसइ भुसुंदा । मति अकुंठ हरि भगति अखंडा ॥ १ ॥
देखि सैल प्रसन्न मन भयऊ । माया मोह सोच सब गयऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gaya'u garuṛa jaham' basa'i bhusuṇḍā. mati akunṭha hari bhagati akhaṇḍā. 1.
dēkhi saila prasanna mana bhaya'ū. māyā mōha sōca saba gaya'ū. 2.

Thereafter, Garud went to the place where lived Bhusund (i.e. the crow-saint whose name was Kaagbhusund). [It was on the summit of the mountain called 'Neel Giri'. Refer Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62 herein above.]

Bhusund had a sharp intellect, was very wise and enlightened, and was well established in having unwavering devotion for Lord Hari. (1)

When Garud saw the majestic mountain he felt very glad at heart. The very sight of the place filled him with exhilaration so much so that all his mental weariness, anxiety and confusions induced by Maya were immediately dispelled¹. (2)

[Note—¹The idea is that a place where saints live has an environment where positive spiritual vibrations are dominant, and the whole place acquires a divine halo around it that immediately calms down agitated nerves and overcomes all perplexities that burden a creature's mind.

This mountain was blessed by the virtue of sage Kaagbhusund living there and the divine stories of Lord Ram being narrated by him on a regular basis. This gave the place a divine halo, and it was beyond the purview of both Maya and Kaal (the effects of delusions and changing times respectively). Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand,

(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 62 where Lord Shiva has hinted at this fact, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88 where Lord Ram has blessed Kaagbhusund to this effect that he would be immune to Kaal and Maya, and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 89 where Kaagbhusund says that ever since he came to this hermitage he has lived there peacefully because Maya could not disturb him any longer.]

करि तड़ाग मज्जन जलपाना । बट तर गयउ हृदयँ हरषाना ॥ ३ ॥
बृद्ध बृद्ध बिहंग तहँ आए । सुनै राम के चरित सुहाए ॥ ४ ॥

kari tarāga majjana jalapānā. baṭa tara gaya'u hrdayam' haraṣānā. 3.
br̥d'dha br̥d'dha bihaṅga taham' ā'ē. sunai rāma kē carita suhā'ē. 4.

Garud first freshened himself by taking a bath in the lake at that place, and took a refreshing drinking of its fresh and cool water.

Then he went to the Banyan Tree, and was gladdened heart as he approached its shadow. (3)

He observed that aged birds of different feathers and stock had come and collected there to cheerfully hear the divine and pleasant stories of Lord Ram being narrated at that place (by the crow-saint Kaagbhusund). (4)

कथा अरंभ करै सोइ चाहा । तेही समय गयउ खगनाहा ॥ ५ ॥
आवत देखि सकल खगराजा । हरषेउ बायस सहित समाजा ॥ ६ ॥

kathā arambha karai sō'i cāhā. tēhī samaya gaya'u khaganāhā. 5.
āvata dēkhi sakala khagarājā. haraṣē'u bāyasa sahita samājā. 6.

Kaagbhusund was just getting ready to start the narration of the divine story of Lord Ram when Garud went there. (5)

When Kaagbhusund saw the King of Birds approaching the place, he as well as all other birds who had assembled there were filled with delight. (6)

अति आदर खगपति कर कीन्हा । स्वागत पूछि सुआसन दीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥
करि पूजा समेत अनुरागा । मधुर बचन तब बोलेउ कागा ॥ ८ ॥

ati ādara khagapati kara kīnhā. svāgata pūchi su'āsana dīnhā. 7.
kari pūjā samēta anurāgā. madhura bacana taba bōlē'u kāgā. 8.

He (Kaagbhusund) got up enthusiastically to welcome the King of Birds with great respect. He asked the latter's well-being and offered him a comfortable and elevated seat to sit upon¹. (7)

Then he (Kaagbhusund) paid his obeisance to the exalted guest (Garud) and duly worshipped him (in accordance with the normal practice of welcoming and showing due respect to the king of the realm).

Once these formalities were finished, the Crow (Kaagbhusund) spoke most sweetly --- (8)

[Note—¹Garud was a ‘King of Birds’, and so Kaagbhusund offered him a seat befitting his stature. Perhaps he always kept a separate seat reserved for some important guest who might come to hear the discourse.]

दो०. नाथ कृतारथ भयउँ मैं तव दरसन खगराज ।

आयसु देहु सो करौं अब प्रभु आयहु केहि काज ॥ ६३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

nātha kṛtāratha bhaya'um̐ maim̐ tava darasana khagarāja.
āyasu dēhu sō karaum̐ aba prabhu āyahu kēhi kāja. 63 (a).

{Kaagbhusund was overwhelmed and exceedingly happy by the arrival at his hermitage of such an exalted guest as Garud for this was a great honour for him and a rare privilege for the crow-saint that the ‘king of birds’ would personally come to him to hear him teach and narrate the divine stories of Lord Ram. So he expressed his gratitude.}

Kaagbhusund expressed his pleasure and happiness when he told Garud, ‘Oh King of Birds (khagarāja)! I am exceedingly obliged and feeling blessed by your sight. Oh my Lord (prabhu)! Now please tell me the reason for your visit and I will do my best to fulfil your wishes.’ (Doha no. 63-a)

सदा कृतारथ रूप तुम्ह कह मृदु बचन खगेस ।

जेहि कै अस्तुति सादर निज मुख कीन्हि महेस ॥ ६३ (ख) ॥

sadā kṛtāratha rūpa tumha kaha mṛdu bacana khagēsa.
jēhi kai astuti sādara nija mukha kīnhi mahēsa. 63 (b).

Garud replied politely and sweetly, ‘Indeed and in all sooth, you are an embodiment of blessedness and good fortunes, one who has been so reverentially and lavishly praised by Lord Shiva with his own mouth¹. (Doha no. 63-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 62.]

चौ०. सुनहु तात जेहि कारन आयउँ । सो सब भयउ दरस तव पायउँ ॥ १ ॥

देखि परम पावन तव आश्रम । गयउ मोह संसय नाना भ्रम ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu tāta jēhi kārana āya'um̃. sō saba bhaya'u darasa tava pāya'um̃. 1.
dēkhi parama pāvana tava āśrama. gaya'u mōha sansaya nānā bhrama. 2.

[Garud continued—] Listen Dear! The reason why I have come to you has already been accomplished and I have had the good fortune and the privilege of seeing your divine self¹. (1)

As soon as I had a glimpse of your holy hermitage, all my delusions, confusions and doubts of varying dispensations were dispelled². (2)

[Note—¹There were two purposes for Garud coming to the hermitage of Kaagbhusund. One was that he wanted to get rid of his mental perplexities, disturbances and restlessness, and this was accomplished as soon as he was within the periphery of the saint's hermitage. This is clearly mentioned in the Chaupai line no. 2 here, as well as in Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 63 herein above.

The importance of having the company of saints and pious people has been stressed in Ram Charit Manas, Chaupai line nos. 6-11 that precede Doha no. 3.

The other reason was that Garud was surprised why such exalted souls as sage Narad, the creator Brahma and Lord Shiva had such a high opinion of Kaagbhusund who was a 'bird' by birth. So, being a 'king of the birds' he wondered how such an exalted subject of his own kingdom had escaped his notice. He wanted to find out if there was any truth in what Narad, Brahma and Shiva said. When he reached the hermitage of the crow-saint, the sublime spiritual atmosphere and the holy aura of the place overwhelmed him. He then realised that many a times a priceless gem lie hidden in one's own treasury while one goes about begging from others.

To wit, had Garud known that there was one such highly enlightened and blessed member of his own kingdom, why would he then have gone searching for answers to his mental confusions at other places, such as to Narad, Brahma and Shiva? Wouldn't he have come straight to Kaagbhusund or even summon him to his own place?

So therefore, this other reason for Garud coming to Kaagbhusund's hermitage—the enquiry about a unique crow who was supposed to be wiser, more enlightened and knowledgeable about matters related to Lord Ram—has also now been satisfied. This is evident in Garud's lavish praises for Kaagbhusund in Doha no. 63-b.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 94-b where Garud has reiterated the same idea.]

अब श्रीराम कथा अति पावनि । सदा सुखद दुख पुंज नसावनि ॥ ३ ॥

सादर तात सुनावहु मोही । बार बार बिनवउँ प्रभु तोही ॥ ४ ॥

aba śrīrāma kathā ati pāvani. sadā sukhada dukha puñja nasāvani. 3.
sādara tāta sunāvahu mōhī. bāra bāra binava'um̃ prabhu tōhī. 4.

Now my dear (aba -- tāta), narrate to me, with great respect and reverence, the divine story of Lord Ram which is most pure and holy, and which not only is always a

provider of bliss, delight, happiness and joy unbound but also is a remover of the root of all sorts of grief, miseries, sorrows and torments of various hues. (3)

I most earnestly and reverentially request you repeatedly to narrate that story for my benefit¹.’ (4)

[Note—¹Garud requested the crow saint Kaagbhusund to narrate the life story of Lord Sri Ram so that he can see the light of wisdom and get peace at heart. This history is eternally delightful and a cure for all spiritual torments and sufferings.

After the initial formalities and exchange of courtesy, Garud now comes to the main purpose of his visit—which was to hear the divine story of Lord Ram. Lord Shiva had advised him that the only way by which he would be able to get rid of his confusions and restlessness was to live for a long time at a place where a saint lives, and hear the divine story of Lord Ram being narrated there. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 61.

The stupendous glories and the profundity of the spiritual importance of hearing the divine story of Lord Ram has been outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 47; (iii) Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114.

Garud has ‘repeatedly’ (bāra bāra) prayed to Kaagbhusund to emphasise his eagerness, his earnestness and a strong desire to hear the story of Lord Ram. This is a very important point to note—the story of Lord Ram should be told only to those who are serious about it, and not to those who hear it for entertainment! This sanction is clearly implied when it is said that only those who find the company of saints very pleasant are eligible to hear the story of Lord Ram as stated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 128 because saints don’t talk about worldly matters.]

सुनत गरुड़ कै गिरा बिनीता । सरल सुप्रेम सुखद सुपुनीता ॥ ५ ॥
भयउ तासु मन परम उछाहा । लाग कहै रघुपति गुन गाहा ॥ ६ ॥

sunata garuṛa kai girā binītā. sarala suprēma sukhada supunītā. 5.
bhaya'u tāsū mana parama uchāhā. lāga kahai raghupati guna gāhā. 6.

Hearing these prayerful words of request from Garud, words that were honest and truthful, polite, affectionate, courteous and pleasant to hear (i.e. words that came from Garud’s heart and showed his sincerity of purpose and eagerness) [5]---

--- his (Kaagbhusund’s) heart was filled with exhilaration. So he started the narration of the sacred story of Lord Ram, and the Lord’s glories and divinity [6]. (5-6)

प्रथमहिं अति अनुराग भवानी । रामचरित सर कहेसि बखानी ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि नारद कर मोह अपारा । कहेसि बहुरि रावन अवतारा ॥ ८ ॥
प्रभु अवतार कथा पुनि गाई । तब सिसु चरित कहेसि मन लाई ॥ ९ ॥

prathamahimā ati anurāga bhavānī. rāmacarita sara kahēsi bakhānī. 7.
 puni nārada kara mōha apārā. kahēsi bahuri rāvana avatārā. 8.
 prabhu avatāra kathā puni gāī. taba sisu carita kahēsi mana lāī. 9.

{Lord Shiva, who is the original narrator of this divine story pertaining to sage Kaagbhusund's narration for the benefit of Garud as indicated earlier from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Doha no. 55, told Parvati, his divine consort who was also known by the name of Uma, as follows:- }

‘Oh Bhavani (one of the many names of Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva)! Kaagbhusund thus began his narration of the sacred story of Lord Ram with great reverence. In the beginning he most affectionately described the symbolic lake that contains the nectar of the divine story of Lord Ram that narrates the Lord's many deeds and the sportly activities that he undertook during his manifestation as a human being (rāmacarita sara)¹. (7)

Then he described the way Narad was deluded under the influence of the Lord's Maya (delusion-creating powers)², and this was followed by the story of the birth of Ravana (the king of the demon race and the ruler of their capital Lanka)³. (8)

After explaining the cause for the Supreme Lord's decision to assume a human form as Lord Ram (to eliminate the horrors caused to earth and all living beings by the demons led by Ravana)⁴, Kaagbhusund sang the story of the Lord's incarnation (descent upon the earth), and then he devoted his mind to recount cheerfully and with great interest the joy and the fun of the time when the Lord was a child, and the many happy events of that period associated with the childhood days in the life of the Lord⁵. (9)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 40.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 139.

Narad was very proud of his pedigree as he was the son of the Creator Brahma, was a great, learned and wise saint and sage, was very close to Lord Vishnu, and was one of the most trusted devotees of the Lord. The Lord wished to remove his sense of pride and ego, and make him realise that all the virtues he possesses are due to the Lord's grace upon him. So the Lord spread his maverick Maya, delusion and the funny tricks that it plays, on him. Narad, who had always prided himself for his self-control and restraint over his sensual organs, fell in the trap of loving a girl and deciding to marry her at all costs. Lord Vishnu stage-managed the entire episode in such a way that when Narad could not fulfil his dreams he cursed Lord Vishnu, the very Lord who was his revered God and to whom he had vowed submission and devotion for life. Finally, when the Lord withdrew the shadow of his Maya, Narad realised his horrible mistake and begged the Lord for forgiveness.

³Refer: The story of Ravana and the birth of the demon race have been described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 184.]

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 192—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206.

Ravana spread terror in the entire universe—he spared neither the Gods in heaven nor the creatures on earth. Finally, fed-up and tormented endlessly, Mother Earth and all other Gods prayed to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, to provide them help and succour. The Lord promised them that he would come down to earth himself to eliminate this scourge.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 191—to Doha no. 205.

See Doha no. 64 herein below.

Kaagbhusund was deeply absorbed in the narration so much so that his body was thrilled, his heart was filled with joy and affection for the Lord, and his mind was exhilarated.]

दो०. बालचरित कहि बिबिधि बिधि मन महँ परम उछाह ।

रिषि आगवन कहेसि पुनि श्रीरघुबीर बिबाह ॥ ६४ ॥

dōhā.

bālacarita kahi bibidhi bidhi mana maham̐ parama uchāha.
riṣi āgavana kahēsi puni śrīraghubīra bibāha. 64.

As Kaagbhusund narrated the many events associated with the childhood days of Lord Ram, he was exceedingly ecstatic in his Mana (heart and mind). He narrated the various pranks, joys and episodes during the childhood days of Lord Ram.

Then he narrated the story of sage Vishwamitra's arrival (at Ayodhya and taking Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman with him to his hermitage with the aim of getting rid of the demons who were defiling his fire sacrifice)¹.

This was followed by the narration of the events that culminated in Lord Ram's marriage (with Sita at Janakpur)². (Doha no. 64)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 210.

Sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice was repeatedly defiled by the demons. Though the sage could have destroyed these demons himself but he desisted from doing so as becoming angry and killing someone during the progress of a fire sacrifice would have disrupted it and nullified its good effects. So he decided to go to Ayodhya and bring Lord Ram and Laxman to protect his rituals and punish the demons.

King Dasrath was initially reluctant, but his chief priest, sage Vasistha, prevailed upon him and advised him to do what sage Vishwamitra wished. At the sage's hermitage, the Lord slayed the army of demons and helped Vishwamitra to successfully complete his sacrifice.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 353.

The sage was very obliged and happy. He wanted to express his thanks to king Dasrath as well as reward Lord Ram and establish his fame in the whole world. So he took the two brothers to Janakpur where a bow-breaking ceremony was being held. It

was to be attended by all the mighty kings and princes on earth at that time, and its objective was to marry Sita, the beautiful princess of the kingdom, to anyone who was able to break a 'bow'. This 'bow' was not an ordinary one; it was extremely heavy and strong as it belonged to Lord Shiva some time in the past. So it was not a joke to even lift it from its place in the ground, forget about bending it and breaking it!

All the assembled competitors failed—individually as well as in huge groups—to as much as move the bow by an inch. It was then that Lord Ram, on the instructions of sage Vishwamitra, lifted and broke the bow easily in front of the whole assembly. He thus became eligible to marry Sita. Later on, all the three brothers of Lord Ram, i.e. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, too were married to other sisters of Sita at the same venue.]

चौ०. बहुरि राम अभिषेक प्रसंगा । पुनि नृप बचन राज रस भंगा ॥ १ ॥

पुरबासिन्ह कर बिरह बिषादा । कहेसि राम लछिमन संबादा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bahuri rāma abhiṣēka prasaṅgā. puni nr̥pa bacana rāja rasa bhaṅgā. 1.
purabāsinha kara biraha biṣādā. kahēsi rāma lachimana sambādā. 2.

Then Kaagbhusund narrated the plans for anointing Lord Ram as Prince-Regent of the kingdom of Ayodhya by his father Dasrath, and the sudden interruption of the ceremonies due to his father's pledges given to his step mother Kaikeyi¹. (1)

Then he described the profound sorrows and agonies of the residents of Ayodhya when they learnt that their beloved Lord Ram is being exiled for fourteen years².

This was followed by the conversation between Lord Ram and his brother Laxman (who refused to stay back and insisted that he would accompany the Lord to the forest)³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Doha no. 40.

King Dasrath of Ayodhya wanted to crown Lord Ram on the throne of the kingdom. But if that happened, the main purpose of the Lord coming down to earth as a human being, viz. to eliminate the cruel demons and to bless the countless sages and hermits who had been doing severe Tapa, i.e. enduring so much hardship in order to attain the Lord, would be in doldrums. Because to achieve this objective it was necessary for Lord Ram to wonder in the forest so that he could go and mingle with the sages and hermits and ascetics who lived isolated lives in secluded places strewn all over the countless forests. Then he had to eliminate Ravana keeping in mind the parameters of the boon that Brahma had granted him—and one implied immunity was that he could not be killed by an army of humans.

As a king of Ayodhya, even if Lord Ram wanted to fight Ravana to eliminate him it would not have been possible for him to do it alone, for he would be obliged to take an army along. That would defeat the very purpose as it would be against Brahma's boon for Ravana, and so the latter would have survived no matter how invincible Lord Ram's army might have been. The Lord must do it single-handedly to comply with the restrictions imposed by Brahma's boon for Ravana's death.

Hence, it was absolutely essential that some sort of obstacle is created and the Lord would be free to go to the forest to bless the many sages, hermits and ascetics who were waiting for him, and to move ahead to eliminate the demons in their own fort. This is the reason why the Lord used his famous Maya to create a situation where he was forced to a fourteen year exile.

Kaikeyi agreed to bear the ignominy for the rest of her life by becoming instrumental in the great Game that the Lord of the World decided to play, if that served the Lord's purpose! So she prevailed upon her husband, king Dasrath, to send the Lord to the forest. No one ever realised the immense personal sacrifice that Kaikeyi had made in this connection; everyone blamed her, even her own son Bharat never talked with her for the rest of his life. This is clearly said in Tulsidas' book "Geetawali", Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.

Only Lord Ram had known and acknowledged this secret of Kaikeyi's personal sacrifice, and he had always shown her the same respect that he had for her prior to the event of his being sent to the forest exile at her behest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, line no. 4 of Doha no. 6; and Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 244 where the Lord made it a point to especially meet Kaikeyi and show his respect to her.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51.

The subjects of Ayodhya loved Lord Ram very dearly. And so when the news spread that he was going to the forest, the whole city plunged in gloom and grief.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76.

When Laxman, the Lord's younger brother, heard about the entire episode, he decided firmly that he would accompany him to the forest. The Lord initially tried to reason with him and persuade him to stay at home, but when he saw his determination he gave his consent.]

बिपिन गवन केवट अनुरागा । सुरसरि उतरि निवास प्रयागा ॥ ३ ॥

बालमीक प्रभु मिलन बखाना । चित्रकूट जिमि बसे भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

bipina gavana kēvaṭa anurāgā. surasari utari nivāsa prayāgā. 3.
bālamīka prabhu milana bakhānā. citrakūṭa jimi basē bhagavānā. 4.

Then Kaagbhusund narrated how Lord Ram departed for the forest (for fourteen years)¹.

This was followed by the narration of the Lord meeting the boatman known as Kevat, and the latter's devotion and honour for the Lord. Then the Lord crossed the river Ganges on a boat rowed by the boatman².

After crossing river Ganges, the Lord stopped at many places till he reached a place called Prayag (which is situated on the confluence of the three holy rivers, Ganges, Jamuna and Saraswati) where he stayed for some time (in the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj) before resuming his journey onwards³. (3)

Thereafter, Kaagbhusund described the meeting between sage Valmiki and Lord Ram⁴, and how the Lord stayed at Chitrakoot⁵. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 79—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100.

King Dasrath sent his chief minister, named Sumantra, with a chariot to pick up Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman as they walked towards the gate of the city to embark on their onwards journey to the forest. The three boarded this chariot in order to make a quick exit, but the grieving and weeping citizens thronged it and ran behind it from all sides, slowing its speed to a slow crawl. The Lord felt extremely pitiful and was overwhelmed with sadness, but did not know what to do. Eventually he had to tell Sumantra to take him out quietly in the darkness of the night when the tired citizens were sleeping on the ground. When they all woke up the next morning and found that the Lord had gone, they lamented grievously but had no choice except to return home and wait for the Lord's coming back at the end of the exile period.

Later on, Lord Ram asked Sumantra to return as well because they had reached the banks of the river Ganges, and the Lord had to cross it to the other side.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100—to Doha no. 102.

To cross the river Ganges, Lord Ram asked the boatman to bring his boat, but the latter insisted that he be allowed to first wash the holy feet of the Lord before he took him on board his boat. The Lord obliged him, and the most fortunate boatman had the privilege of washing the Lord's holy feet and distributing this sanctified water to his entire clan that would help them all to attain liberation from their humdrum existence.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 104—to Doha no. 109.

Lord Ram reached Prayag, the holy place where three sacred rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati meet. He bathed there and went to the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj before moving ahead and going to the next hermitage, that of sage Valmiki.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 132.

Sage Valmiki was one of the greatest sages of the time. It was he who would pen the divine story of Lord Ram in his epic known world-wide as the famous "Ramayana". It was at his hermitage that Sita spent her last days and where Lord Ram's twin sons Lava and Kush were born.

During Lord Ram's communion with Valmiki, the sage had described some symbolic places where Lord Ram should reside. These places have immense spiritual significance as they advise a person to know how to attain the Lord in an easy and accessible way. Valmiki then advised Lord Ram to go to Chitrakoot and live there for some time before resuming his onwards journey.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 142.

Chitrakoot was the first place where Lord Ram abided for some time in peace with his wife Sita and brother Laxman after leaving his capital Ayodhya. It was here that Bharat would come to try to persuade the Lord to return. This place was very beautiful with green forests and a river with its streams with sparkling clean waters. The place was inhabited by many sages, hermits and ascetics who benefited spiritually by the Lord's residence amidst them.]

सचिवागवन नगर नृप मरना । भरतागवन प्रेम बहु बरना ॥ ५ ॥
करि नृप क्रिया संग पुरबासी । भरत गए जहँ प्रभु सुख रासी ॥ ६ ॥

sacivāgavana nagara nṛpa maranā. bharatāgavana prēma bahu baranā. 5.
kari nṛpa kriyā saṅga purabāsī. bharata ga'e jaham' prabhu sukha rāsī. 6.

The chief minister of the kingdom (named Sumantra, who was sent by King Dasrath to accompany Lord Ram on a chariot during his departure from Ayodhya, with a mandate to try to persuade the Lord to return) came back to the capital (empty-handed, after dropping Lord Ram, his wife Sita and brother Laxman in the forest at a place where the borders of the kingdom of Ayodhya ended)¹.

When the King (Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram) heard that the minister has come back alone (which implied that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita hadn't returned), he died out of shock and grief².

Then Kaagbhusund narrated Bharat's arrival back home (as he had been away at his maternal grandfather's place during the entire episode of Lord Ram being sent to exile by his crooked mother Kaikeyi)³, and described in different ways about Bharat's expression of undiluted and abundant feeling of love and affection for Lord Ram⁴. (5)

Bharat performed his father's last rites⁵, and accompanied by the residents of Ayodhya he went to Chitrakoot where Lord Ram resided at that time (to bring him back)⁶. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 94—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Doha no. 147.

King Dasrath had sent his most trusted minister named Sumantra on a chariot to pick up the Lord from the outskirts of the city and take him to a far corner of the kingdom so that his words given to Kaikeyi could be fulfilled to some extent. Then, when they reach some far corner of the kingdom or some natural boundary such as a river or a mountain range, Sumantra was instructed to try to persuade the Lord to return home. But it so happened that the Lord refused, and he sent Sumantra back to Ayodhya. He returned with a heavy heart and a shamed face.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 148—to Doha no. 155.

When the king learnt that Sumantra has returned empty-handed, he grieved and died of agony of separation from Lord Ram.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 157—to Doha no. 158.

The throne of Ayodhya now lay vacant. So the chief priest named Vasistha sent a messenger and summoned Bharat and his younger brother Shatrughan who were at their maternal grandfather's place at that time. When the news reached Bharat and he saw the sombre face of the messengers, he became apprehensive that something was surely wrong. He packed up and came back to Ayodhya immediately, only to discover a city plunged in gloom and grieving gravely.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 160—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 169; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 177—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 184.

Back home, Bharat came to know all about the nasty things that had unfolded in the household: his beloved brothers Ram and Laxman along with his sister-in-law Sita were sent to exile at the behest of his crooked mother Kaikeyi, and his father Dasrath was dead. Stunned and flummoxed beyond measure, he vehemently cursed his mother and wailed and grieved for the loss of Lord Ram, Laxman, Sita and Dasrath.

By all his words and actions Bharat made it amply clear to all that he had no role in this sad development, and that no one should ever question his integrity, and his loyalty and love for Lord Ram.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 170—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 171.

However, many things had to be done now. First was the necessity of performing the last rites of king Dasrath whose body had been embalmed earlier. So Bharat did this ritual himself.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 241.

Then a royal court was held to decide the next course of action: who would sit on the throne? Though everyone felt that Bharat should fill the gap and accept the crown at least as a temporary measure till the time Lord Ram came back at the end of his fourteen years of exile, but he flatly refused, saying that the crown and the throne rightly belonged to Lord Ram and he has nothing to do with it. He declared his intention of going to the forest and bringing the Lord back. This decision by him made him dear of the masses and removed all doubts in the mind of the citizens about Bharat's integrity. A huge party was assembled and the procession went to Chitrakoot in the forest where Lord Ram abided at that time.]

पुनि रघुपति बहुबिधि समुझाए । लै पादुका अवधपुर आए ॥ ७ ॥

भरत रहनि सुरपति सुत करनी । प्रभु अरु अत्रि भेंट पुनि बरनी ॥ ८ ॥

puni raghupati bahubidhi samujhā'ē. lai pādukā avadhapura ā'ē. 7.
bharata rahani surapati suta karanī. prabhu aru atri bhēṇṭa puni baranī. 8.

Lord Ram consoled Bharat and explained the complexities of the situation to him in all possible ways (and finally managed to convince Bharat that it is in the best of interests of all that the Lord be allowed to complete his term of fourteen years in the forest, and in the meantime Bharat could use Lord Ram's footwear as his symbolic presence in Ayodhya)¹.

Thereafter, Bharat returned to Ayodhya bringing with him Lord Ram's sandals (a wooden footwear)². (7)

Kaagbhusund described the way Bharat lived at Ayodhya. [Bharat had put these sandals on the throne of Ayodhya, and he himself retired to a place on the outskirts of the city to lead an austere life like that of a hermit.]³

He then continued with his narration, describing the episode involving the son of the King of Gods (Indra; the son's name was Jayant)⁴.

He then described the meeting between Lord Ram and sage Atri⁵. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 304—to Doha no. 308; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 313—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 316.

Bharat tried his level best to try to persuade Lord Ram to return. The Lord explained the complexity of the situation and somehow made Bharat relent. Bharat agreed and said that if it is the Lord's wish, so be it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 316—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 322.

As a token of the Lord's return and be crowned on the throne, Bharat brought the Lord's wooden sandals and put them on the throne of Ayodhya.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 323—to Sortha/Doha no. 326.

After that, Bharat retired to a place on the outskirts of the city and lived there an exemplary life of a hermit for the entire duration of the period of fourteen years while Lord Ram stayed in the forest.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

Indra's son, named Jayant, was very crooked, unruly and mischievous like his father, and behaved like a prince of a king who himself is of an evil and jealous mind. He wanted to tease Sita and test the powers of Lord Ram. So he disguised himself as a crow and went and pricked Sita. Lord Ram was angry, but the Lord is so merciful that instead of immediately killing Jayant he shot a reed at him so that he is inflicted some injury as a punishment, but not killed. Jayant ran for his life everywhere in the universe, but this arrow-like reed followed him in hot pursuit. Finally he met sage Narad who advised him to go and ask for forgiveness from the Lord himself, for no one in this creation can give shelter to someone who opposes the Lord.

Jayant came and pleaded for his life with the Lord who obviously excused him, but the Lord decided that such evil persons need to be punished. So he made Jayant 'one-eyed' so that he would be recognised and scorned by everyone for his evil nature.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7.

Realising that his presence in Chitrakoot will not serve his purpose any more as this location had been known by all by this time and the Lord could not live incognito any more, he decided to move ahead.

He reached the hermitage of sage Atri who lovingly welcomed the Lord and paid his obeisance to him. It was here that the sage's wife Anusuiya had preached Sita, Lord Ram's wife, about the principles that ought to be followed by a righteous wife. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-19 that precede it.]

दो०. कहि बिराध बध जेहि बिधि देह तजी सरभंग ।

बरनि सुतीछन प्रीति पुनि प्रभु अगस्ति सतसंग ॥ ६५ ॥

dōhā.

kahi birādha badha jēhi bidhi dēha tajī sarabhaṅga.
barani sutīchana prīti puni prabhu agasti satasaṅga. 65.

After giving an account of the death of Viradha (a demon who was slayed by Lord Ram in the forest)¹ and the way sage Sarbhanga left his mortal coil (i.e. the way the sage left his body by a self-kindled fire of Yoga after meeting the Lord)², he (Kaagbhusund) proceeded to describe the love and devotion of sage Sutikshan for the Lord³, and then the holy communion sage Agasta had with the Lord⁴. (Doha no. 65)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 7.

Moving ahead from Atri's hermitage, the Lord met a demon named Viradha. He killed the demon, and finding that he was sorrowful the Lord provided him deliverance.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 9.

Sage Sarbhanga was spiritually overwhelmed by his meeting with Lord Ram. He felt ecstatic and lovingly prayed to the Lord before leaving his gross body by burning it in a self-kindled fire of Yoga, thereby attaining emancipation and salvation.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 12.

The next sage the Lord met was Sutikshan. When he heard that his beloved Lord Ram was coming that way where he lived, the sage was totally exhilarated with joy unbound, and he ran thither to meet the Lord in a state of trance, tears spilling from his eyes and body utterly thrilled and beyond his control. He began to dance and sing in ecstasy and jubilation. Then when the climax was reached he went into a 'Samadhi', a trance-like state of meditation and deep reflection, when he sat motionless on the ground, lost in thoughts of the Lord. The Lord thoroughly enjoyed this scene and did not wish to disturb the sage. So for quite some time the Lord hid himself behind a tree, watching Sutikshan's extremely blissful state of spiritual exultation. Eventually, the Lord woke him up, and the sage fell down at his feet. After praying to the Lord and submitting himself to him, the sage accompanied him to the hermitage of sage Agastya.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 13.

It was sage Agastya who advised Lord Ram to move on in the direction of the 'Dandak' forest and live there at a place called 'Panchavati' where many other sages and hermits abided. It is narrated herein below.]

चौ०. कहि दंडक बन पावनताई । गीध मइत्री पुनि तेहि गाई ॥ १ ॥

पुनि प्रभु पंचवटीं कृत बासा । भंजी सकल मुनिह की त्रासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahi daṇḍaka bana pāvanatā'ī. gīdha ma'itrī puni tēhiṁ gā'ī. 1.
puni prabhu pañcabaṭiṁ kṛta bāsā. bhañjī sakala muninha kī trāsā. 2.

After telling Garud about the purification of Dandak-forest by the Lord by the virtue of his staying there for some time¹, Kaagbhusund narrated the friendship between Lord Ram and the Vulture (known as Jatau)². (1)

Thereafter, he narrated the way the Lord stayed at the Panchavati forest and freed all the sages who abided there from their agonies and torments³# (2).

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13.

This forest was earlier cursed, and as a result it was un-inhabited. The Lord's passage through it and his stay at a Panchavati cured this place of the curse and made it vibrant with life once again.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 13.

This vulture would later on sacrifice his life to protect Sita while she was being abducted by the demon king Ravana. To honour his friendship with Jatau who was old like the Lord's own father, the Lord performed his last rite with his own hands. See Chaupai line no. 7 herein below.

Thus, Jatau managed to get that rarest of rare end which not even the greatest of sages and hemits, and not even king Dasrath, the Lord's worldly father, had the privilege to get. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 33.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, 2nd line of Doha no. 13 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 15, 17-18, and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow this Doha.

#It ought to be noted that 'Panchavati' was a pleasant place surrounded by greenery in the middle of the dense forest known as 'Dandak' which was uninhabitable in general. The word 'Panchavati' means a cluster of 'five trees'. These trees were on the banks of the river Godavari; they were huge and provided a perfect place for rest. Here, Lord Ram and his wife Sita and brother Laxman lived in a thatched hut under the combined shade of these five trees.

When sage Agastya had advised Lord Ram to go to the Dandak forest and stay at Panchavati, he had told the Lord that many sages who lived there would also benefit by having a rare chance to meet the Lord and find redemption for their souls. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-17 that precede Doha no. 13.]

पुनि लछिमन उपदेस अनूपा । सूपनखा जिमि कीन्हि कुरूपा ॥ ३ ॥

खर दूषन बध बहुरि बखाना । जिमि सब मरमु दसानन जाना ॥ ४ ॥

puni lachimana upadēsa anūpā. sūpanakhā jimi kīnhi kurūpā. 3.
khara dūṣana badha bahuri bakhānā. jimi saba maramu dasānana jānā. 4.

Then, Kaagbhusund described the way Lord Ram taught his brother Laxman on some wonderful metaphysical concepts in a comprehensive but simple way¹. This was followed by the narration of the event when the demoness known as Supernakha was mutilated². (3)

He went on to narrate the slaying of the demons known as Khar and Dushan (along with their armies) by the Lord³, and the way the demon king Ravana (of Lanka) came to learn about all these developments⁴. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 114—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 17.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.

Supernakha was a sister of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. She was a very lustful female demon, and when she saw the charming form of Lord Ram she was overcome by passion. She assumed a form of a beautiful damsel and approached the Lord with a proposal of marriage, which obviously the Lord refused. Being spurned and rebuked, Supernakha became violent and wished to kill Sita, the Lord's wife. So he asked Laxman to chop-off her ears and nose as a symbolic warning to other such lascivious ladies to mind their own business and leave upright males alone. This incident was the spark that lit the fire that culminated in the ferocious war of Lanka that finally led to the killing of the cruel demons and their king Ravana.

The word 'Supernakha' refers to a female demon who had sharp, long nails, and ears extremely large like a fan or like that of an elephant.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.

Khar and Dushan were the commanders of the demon army and cousins of Supernakha. This army was ordained to look after the interest of the demons in the area where the Dandak forest was situated to ensure that no sage or hermit successfully performed any fire sacrifice that would empower them to kill the demons. When mutilated, Supernakha rushed to these two and complained. Taking this as an open insult and challenge, they rushed to attack the Lord with a vicious blood-thirsty demon army. In the end, all of them were killed by Lord Ram alone.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 21—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 23.

When the entire demon army was decimated, Supernakha dashed to Lanka and reported the events to her brother Ravana. He was stunned and became pensive. He began to wonder who this gentleman was who would be powerful, strong, bold and courageous enough to rebuff Supernakha and provoke the demons. Surely everything was not fine. He had his strong reservations in the beginning and did not want to pick up a fight. But Supernakha applied all her tricks and persuaded Ravana to save the face of the demon race: say, what will the world say, that Ravana could not even protect the dignity and respect of his own sister? This would certainly undermine his fame and authority in the world, and especially in the demon race; it will be a loss of face like no other event. Thus instigated, Ravana decided to face the challenge.]

दसकंधर मारीच बतकही । जेहि बिधि भई सो सब तेहिं कही ॥ ५ ॥
पुनि माया सीता कर हरना । श्रीरघुबीर बिरह कछु बरना ॥ ६ ॥

dasakandhara mārīca batakahī. jēhi bidhi bha'ī sō saba tēhim kahī. 5.
puni māyā sītā kara haranā. śrīraghubīra biraha kachu baranā. 6.

Then, Kaagbhusund described in detail the conversation between Ravana and Marich as it took place¹. (5)

Then he went on to narrate how an illusionary form or a shadowy image of Sita was abducted (by Ravana)², and a little of Lord Ram's grief, desolation and lamentations at her loss was also described by him³. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Doha no. 26.

Ravana went to one of his close confidantes, a demon named Marich. He lived on an island in the middle of the ocean ever since he was flung there by Lord Ram with a headless arrow at the time Marich was trying to defile the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. Marich lived in awe of the Lord and repeated his holy name out of fear ever since. But the mystery of this holy name of the Lord is such that though Marich repeated it out of fear but it made him eligible for salvation and emancipation. Ravana using him as a tool to kidnap Sita was merely an excuse whereby Marich would have a second divine glimpse of Lord Ram before leaving his mortal coil to obtain deliverance at the hands of the Lord himself when he would be shot by the latter.

So, as it happened, Marich tried his best to dissuade Ravana from antagonising Lord Ram, but fate had other things planned. Ravana threatened to kill Marich if he did not comply with his request to become a deer with a golden skin so that the former could abduct Sita, Lord Ram's wife, to avenge Supernakha's mutilation. Dangled between the devil and the deep sea, Marich decided that it was better to die at the hands of the Lord than being tortured and killed by this evil fellow Ravana. So he agreed.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 29.

When Sita saw the golden-skinned deer roaming near her hermitage, she asked Lord Ram to bring it to her so that she could keep it in hermitage. The all-knowing Lord knew the Divine Plan: he knew that this was the beginning of the end of the ferocious demon Ravana for which he had descended from the heaven at the request of the Gods. To ensure that the chastity of Sita would not be compromised, the Lord created, out of his Maya, i.e. his delusion creating powers, a shadow-like Sita that was exactly a replica of her original self. The original Sita was hidden in the fiery glow of Yoga, the stupendous dazzling fire that is generated by meditation. In practical terms, it is believed that she assumed a disembodied body as her soul left her gross body and reverted to its original subtle form as the 'pure consciousness' that has no physical identity and is invisible. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.

So in effect, what Ravana took away was only a 'shadow' of Sita.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede Doha no. 30.

Lord Ram had to make a great show of ignorance and act like a perfect human being so that Ravana did not get a wind of who actually he was. This is because Ravana was a highly learned soul, and he knew that one day he too would have to die like all living beings irrespective of the boons he had extracted from Brahma, the creator, that no ordinary person would be able to kill him. Besides this, he had control over the entire universe at that point of time, so it is reasonable to assume that he was also aware of the promise Lord Vishnu had made to the Gods—i.e. that the Lord would himself come down to earth to get rid of the menace of Ravana. This thing—whether or not this man known as Ram is Lord Vishnu himself who has come to kill Ravana—was weighing very heavily on the mind of Ravana, though he was not certain what the reality was. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

Therefore it was the need of the hour for Lord Ram to keep his identity secret and Ravana confused. Otherwise, if Ravana got the wind that Ram is Lord Vishnu, he would either surrender unconditionally before the Lord or flee and hide somewhere to become untraceable. In the former case, i.e. if he surrendered, Lord Ram would be duty-bound to forgive him, as it would be totally dishonourable to kill someone who has surrendered. Should this happen, the very purpose of the Lord's entire journey to earth would be nullified and made void. Who knows that after escaping death and when the Lord goes away, Ravana would not revert back to his old ugly ways? It was not a chance that could be taken by the Lord.

So, Lord Ram decided to act like an ordinary man whose wife was kidnapped by someone in the forest: he wailed and grieved and wept and lamented profusely so that any spy of the demons who was put on watch, would go and report to Ravana that Sita's husband is an ordinary man like any other. And therefore, there was no cause of bother or worry for the demon king on that count.]

पुनि प्रभु गीध क्रिया जिमि कीन्ही । बधि कबंध सबरिहि गति दीन्ही ॥ ७ ॥
बहुरि बिरह बरनत रघुबीरा । जेहि बिधि गए सरोबर तीरा ॥ ८ ॥

puni prabhu gīdha kriyā jimi kīnhī. badhi kabandha sabarihi gati dīnhī. 7.
bahuri biraha baranata raghubīrā. jēhi bidhi ga'e sarōbara tīrā. 8.

Thereafter, Kaagbhusund described the way Lord Ram performed the last rites of the Vulture king (Jatau)¹, and then how he slayed the demon named Kabandha³ and went ahead on his way to the hermitage of Sabari (the old tribal woman) where the Lord provided her salvation and emancipation³. (7)

Then Kaagbhusund described the way Lord Ram wailed and grieved for Sita as he wended his way onwards in the forest⁴. The Lord finally went to a pleasant lake called Pampa which abounded in natural beauty, and where he took rest for some time under the shade of a leafy tree⁵. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-26 that precede it, and from Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.

As has been said earlier in Chaupai line no. 1 herein above, Jatau, the Vulture, was promised friendship by Lord Ram. Jatau kept his part of the bargain by laying down his life in a valiant attempt to save Sita from being kidnapped by Ravana. When Lord Ram came that way where Jatau lay writhing in pain and murmuring the holy name of the Lord, the Lord showered his love on him by picking him up in his arms, cleaning his wounds with his own hands, and showing great respect and gratitude to him. But Jatau's wounds were so serious that he could not survive. When he died, Lord Ram performed his last rites in the same way he would have done for his own father. This at once catapulted Jatau to an exalted position and gave him a privilege that not even the greatest of sages and hermits obtained any time in history.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Kabandha was a Gandharva, a sort of demi-God, who was turned into a demon by the curse of sage Durbasa. Lord Ram liberated him from this curse and his soul went to the heaven in accordance with his destiny.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.

Sabari was an old tribal woman who had great devotion for Lord Ram. She had been living alone in the forest in the hope that one day she would be able to have a communion with her beloved Lord before discarding her mortal coil. As the word spread in the forest that Lord Ram has arrived and was moving around blessing and interacting with the many sages and hermits who lived there, Sabari's spirit lifted and she longed for the moment when the Lord would come visiting her. So when he did come, Sabari was extremely excited. Her love and devotion for the Lord knew no bounds; she offered him plums she had carefully picked up and stored for this moment. At the time of his departure, Sabari left her mortal coil by burning her gross body in a self-lit fire of Yoga and thereby allowing her soul to find emancipation and salvation. Like in the case of Jatau, Lord Ram performed her last rites with his own hands like the way he would have done for his own mother.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 39.

After providing liberation and deliverance to Sabari, Lord Ram moved ahead in the direction of the Pampa lake as advised by her. His mental state of grief and sadness at the loss of his wife Sita has been described in the verses referred to herein above.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 41.

By-and-by, the Lord arrived at the lake called Pampa. It was a fascinating place with verdant greenery all around and a fresh-water lake on one side. The tired Lord Ram and his brother Laxman took a bath here and rested under the shade of tree for some time. It was here that sage Narad came to meet the Lord as described herein below.]

दो०. प्रभु नारद संवाद कहि मारुति मिलन प्रसंग ।

पुनि सुग्रीव मितार्ई बालि प्रान कर भंग ॥ ६६ (क) ॥

dōhā.

prabhu nārada sambāda kahi māruti milana prasaṅga.
puni sugrīva mitā'ī bālī prāna kara bhaṅga. 66 (a).

Then Kaagbhusund narrated Lord Ram's conversation with sage Narad¹, his meeting with Hanuman, son of the Wind-God², his friendship with Sugriv (the exiled prince of the monkey kingdom)³, and the slaying of (Sugriv's brother) Bali⁴. (Doha no. 66-a)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

When Lord Ram and Laxman were resting under the shade of a tree on the banks of the Pampa lake, all the Gods came and prayed to the Lord. After all of them went to their respective abodes and the Lord was alone, sage Narad came to meet him. The sage was very sorry that the Lord has had to suffer so much because of his curse. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 136—to Doha no. 137.}

Sage Narad came to Lord Ram, paid his respects and prayed to him, and then asked the Lord to tell him why he had not allowed him (Narad) to marry when he had a desire to do so. After that, the sage asked the Lord to outline the characters and qualities of true saints. The Lord's answer satisfied him and he went his way.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4.

Moving ahead in the direction of Lanka, Lord Ram and Laxman arrived near Mt. Rishyamook where Sugriv lived on its summit with his few trusted companions after he was ejected from the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha by his elder brother Baali due to some misunderstanding between the two.

When Sugriv saw two strangers wondering below, he wondered who they were; are they spies sent by Baali? So he sent his trusted friend Hanuman, who was the son of the Wind-God, to go and investigate. Hanuman came to Lord Ram disguised as a Brahmin, and discovered to his joy that the stranger was none else but his true Lord Ram for whose arrival he had been waiting for so long. He fell at the feet of the Lord and the two embraced each other. Later on it would turn out that Hanuman would be the most trusted and dearest of devotees of the Lord in future.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 4 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

Hanuman took Lord Ram and Laxman to the top of the mountain and forged a friendship between Sugriv and Lord Ram. Both empathised with each other as both had suffered the same fate: they were exiled from their respective kingdoms, and were suffering the agony of separation from their wives. Sugriv's wife was kept by his brother Baali when he threw him out of the kingdom.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

When Lord Ram heard the story of Sugriv and found that grave injustice was done to him, then like a true friend should do, the Lord decided to help Sugriv by eliminating his jealous brother and restoring his right to the throne of Kishkindha.

This eventually led to the killing of Baali. Since Baali had prayed to Lord Ram and asked for mercy and forgiveness at the time of his death, the Lord provided him deliverance and sent him to his own abode in the heaven.]

कपिहि तिलक करि प्रभु कृत सैल प्रबरषन बास ।
बरनन बर्षा सरद अरु राम रोष कपि त्रास ॥ ६६ (ख) ॥

kapihi tilaka kari prabhu kṛta saila prabaraṣana bāsa.
baranana barṣā sarada aru rāma rōṣa kapi trāsa. 66 (b).

Lord Ram anointed Sugriv as King of Kishkindha¹ and himself took up residence on the summit of a mountain known as Prabarshan². Then followed an account of the rainy and autumn seasons during which the Lord lived on this mountain³, and Lord Ram's anger at Sugriv (when the Lord observed that the latter had done nothing to search for the whereabouts of Sita as promised in the beginning of their friendship)⁴. (Doha no. 66-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 11 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it.

Lord Ram kept his promise and appointed Sugriv on the throne of Kishkindha.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it.

After that, the Lord spent the rainy and the autumn seasons on Mt. Prabarshan. He kept his vows of living like a hermit in a forest environment for fourteen years by refusing to enter the city of Kishkindha though Sugriv would have cheerfully hosted him.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.

These verses excellently describe in poetic finery the beauty of Nature during the two seasons: the rainy and the autumn.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 21.

Lord Ram was annoyed that once Sugriv got back his kingdom he had all but forgotten the promises he had made to the Lord—that he would do his best to find where Sita was. So the Lord sent Laxman to reprimand Sugriv and make him come to his senses. Sugriv realised his mistake, said he was sorry, asked for forgiveness, and assembled a huge army of messengers and spies to go and trace Sita. This is narrated below.]

चौ०. जेहि बिधि कपिपति कीस पठाए । सीता खोज सकल दिसि धाए ॥ १ ॥

बिबर प्रबेस कीन्ह जेहि भाँती । कपिन्ह बहोरि मिला संपाती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jēhi bidhi kapipati kīsa paṭhā'ē. sītā khōja sakala disi dhā'ē. 1.
bibara prabēsa kīnha jēhi bhāmṭī. kapinha bahōri milā sampātī. 2.

Kaagbhusund then continued his narration, describing how the monkey king sent his messengers or scouts in all directions in search of Sita¹ [1], and how the group sent towards the south entered a cave² and emerged from there to meet Sampati (vulture Jatau's brother)³ [2]. (1-2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 21—to Doha no. 23.

Hundreds of thousands of monkeys and bears assembled for the purpose. They were directed to go in every direction of the earth and search for Sita. It is to be noted here especially that these messengers or scouts were most suitable for the job as the extended forested areas of the earth were a part of their natural habitat and they were well acquainted with the geography and topography of these places. Natural obstacles such as mountains, rivers and forests and their wild animals and intractable paths were no problems for them. Obviously, they were far better qualified in this search than humans would have been.

One such group led by Angad, Hanuman and Jamvant, the bear king, headed towards the south. Eventually, this group would reach the edge of the ocean across which lay the fort of Lanka in the middle of the vast ocean that stretched beyond.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 25.

Exhausted, hungry and thirsty, this latter group was searching for water to drink. Hanuman located a cave from which emerged playful swans, herons and chirping birds with wet wings; many were hovering over the mouth of the cave ready to enter it, and many others were emerging from it.

The thirst group deduced that surely there was a fresh water source inside. So they gingerly picked their way in it and at its end saw a wonderful garden where they met a hermitress who told them the way out of the cave which would take them straight to the shore of the ocean across which lay Lanka. Meanwhile, the group refreshed itself by drinking and bathing in the fresh water-body inside the cave and eating sweet fruits that were there in abundance. The hermitress herself went to Lord Ram, prayed to the Lord, and on his instructions went to the northern mountains to do meditation and austerities at a holy place called Badrinath.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 29.

The hermitress had told the group of monkeys and bears to close their eyes so that she could transport them by her transcendental powers to the edge of the ocean. When the group opened its eyes they found themselves there, with the ocean spreading like a formidable obstacle before them. All of them sat down in dismay and gloom, and an abject sense of hopelessness and failure overcame them. Meanwhile, Sampati, who was an old vulture and the elder brother of Jatau, saw the dejected group of monkeys and bears and thought that when they died he would have a great feast.

The terrified group loudly invoked Jatau's sacrifices for the cause of Lord Ram even as they implored Sampati to spare them as they were also on the Lord's mission. When Sampati heard the full story, he felt sorry for them, and in order to do his bit to help in the Lord's mission, he told them about the location of Sita in Lanka.

This was made possible as vultures have the uncanny ability to see long distances. Then Sampati went his way where the king of birds Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, resided—i.e. to the heaven.]

सुनि सब कथा समीरकुमारा । नाघत भयउ पयोधि अपारा ॥ ३ ॥
लंकाँ कपि प्रबेस जिमि कीन्हा । पुनि सीतहि धीरजु जिमि दीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

sunī saba kathā samīrakumārā. nāghata bhaya'u payōdhi apārā. 3.
laṅkāṁ kapi prabēsa jimi kīnhā. puni sītahi dhīraju jimi dīnhā. 4.

Upon hearing all the news (from Sampati, about Sita's location at Lanka), the son of the Wind God (i.e. Hanuman) jumped over the vast ocean¹. (3)

Kaagbhusund then described how he entered Lanka², and then, how he met and reassured Sita³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.

No one in the group of monkeys and bears had the ability to cross the vast gap of the ocean between its northern edge where they were currently seated and the place where the island of Lanka was situated—a distance of roughly 100 Yojans, which means approximately 800 miles. {Refer: Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 29.}

Jamvant, the old king of bears, knew who actually Hanuman was, i.e. that he was the son of the Wind-God, and therefore he had, for one, the ability to fly in the air like a bird, and secondly, he possessed an incomparable strength that the powerful forces of wind possess. So Jamvant requested Hanuman to pick up the challenge and do his might to serve the purpose of the Lord. This way he would get unparalleled fame and glory in the world personally, and bring laurels to the group in general.

The brave Hanuman recalled the purpose of his descent on earth, and immediately embarked on this sacred venture by assuming a huge form and launching himself from a high hill like a modern-day missile. He sailed across the sky over the choppy waters of the mighty ocean. On the way to Lanka however, he met and easily overcame some obstacles that were created by the demon commanders who had posted guards in the ocean to prevent any intruder from entering the city of Lanka.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Doha no. 5.

Finally, Hanuman landed on the soil of Lanka. There he met Lankini, a female demon who was tasked to guard the main entrance to the fort. A single blow from Hanuman's clenched fist made her vomit blood. She realised that he was not an ordinary intruder but someone with an extraordinary authority and power to fulfil the mandate of the Creator. So she blessed him and quietly allowed him in.

Then the wise Hanuman assumed a form of a small mosquito to avoid detection, and freely roamed in the city of Lanka, looking at all its nooks and corners to find where Sita might be. It was night time, and everyone was asleep. He peered in all the houses of the demons, and even in the royal palace of Ravana to investigate Sita's whereabouts, but failed.

When it was nearly dawn, he located a small house that bore the name of Lord Ram on its walls, and from inside it he heard someone muttering the holy name. He marvelled at this astonishing sight which was an incongruity in the middle of the city of demons, and determined to explore further. He knocked at the door and to his amazement he discovered that it was the home of a devotee of Lord Ram whose name was Vibhishan, and who happened to be a younger brother of Ravana, the demon king. The two were mutually astonished at this meeting, and thanked the Lord for this coincidence. After preliminary exchange of greetings and pleasantries, Vibhishan asked Hanuman the purpose of his visit, and when he was told about it he disclosed the exact location of Sita to Hanuman: that she was confined to a garden called 'Ashok Van'.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17.

Hanuman took his leave from Vibhishan and went and hid himself on a huge leafy tree under the shade of which sat Sita, forlorn, distressed, emaciated and grieving. She was surrounded by female guards. Just at that time Ravana came and threatened Sita with death if she remained stubborn and refused to surrender herself before him. Hanuman watched silently, seething with anger, and his determination to eliminate the scourge of the demons became all the more firm.

When Ravana left fretting and fuming, Hanuman dropped the signet ring that the Lord had given him as a token for recognition by Sita, that he was a genuine messenger from the Lord himself and not some imposter. Sita was apprehensive in the beginning, but in due course of time she realised that Hanuman was indeed the Lord's faithful devotee, and then she profusely blessed him. Hanuman assured her that the Lord is coming soon with a huge army of monkeys and bears to free her from her captivity. But she would have to have patience and courage, and bear with some more sufferings till the Lord arrives.]

बन उजारि रावनहि प्रबोधी । पुर दहि नाघेउ बहुरि पयोधी ॥ ५ ॥
आए कपि सब जहँ रघुराई । बैदेही की कुसल सुनाई ॥ ६ ॥

bana ujāri rāvanahi prabōdhī. pura dahi nāghē'u bahuri payōdhī. 5.
ā'e kapi saba jaham' raghurā'ī. baidēhī kī kusala sunā'ī. 6.

Then Kaagbhusund narrated how Hanuman ruined and laid to waste the magnificent garden of fruit trees where Sita was confined by Ravana¹, and how he exhorted Ravana to abandon his arrogance and evil wishes, and to ensure his own welfare as well of his clan he should free Sita and make truce with Lord Ram². [But having failed to persuade Ravana to come to his senses—] Then Hanuman burnt the city and reduced it to ashes³, and once again crossed the ocean to reach the other side (where his friends were eagerly waiting for his arrival)⁴. (5)

All the monkeys came back to where Lord Ram was waiting for them⁵, and they told Lord Ram the good news about Sita (that she has been traced and is still alive)⁶. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 18.

Hanuman was very hungry, so he sought Sita's permission to eat the ripe sweet fruits from the trees that were abundant in the garden. Hanuman needed an excuse to punish Ravana and warn him of the fate that stared him in his face now onwards. He also wished to show-case his individual strength and valour to Sita in order to assure her of the combined might of the monkey army in case she had some reservations about the effectiveness of the Lord making a decision of facing a formidable enemy such as the demons with their king Ravana with a rag-tag army of humble monkeys and bears.

Once Sita granted her permission, Hanuman virtually went berserk in the garden and the orchard—uprooting trees, demolishing buildings, littering the place with ruins, and beating the guards black and blue. Terrified and at their wits end, the survivors rushed to report to Ravana about the havoc caused by a strange 'monkey'.

Ravana sent his son Akshakumar with his army of demons who were all killed by Hanuman. Stunned and angry, Ravana sent his other son Meghanad who, after taking a severe beating in the beginning, somehow managed to trap Hanuman in a snare and bring him to the court of Ravana.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.

There in the court of Ravana, Hanuman tried his best to persuade the demon king to abandon his reckless behaviour and to be sensible enough to free Sita and make peace with Lord Ram so that the demon race is saved from annihilation. But Ravana was arrogant and stubborn to the hilt. He would not listen.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 26.

After a heated argument with Hanuman, Ravana ordered that his tail be wrapped in cloth dipped in oil and set on fire.

As the fire flared up, Hanuman made his body so small that it slipped out of the wrappings of cloth but only a tip of his tail remained stuck to one end of the blazing cloth so that he could drag it behind him. Then he leapt across the city, from building to building, market place to market place, from public squares to gardens to surrounding forests etc. that eventually ignited a huge fire across the length and breadth of the great city of Lanka that reduced it to a smouldering heap of blackened rubble.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 28.

Finally, Hanuman jumped into the ocean to douse the remaining part of the wrapped cloth that still clung to the end of his tail, cooled his body, and stood before Sita to take leave of her. Then he jumped over the waters of the roaring ocean with the same zeal and ease with which he had come to Lanka sometimes back, to reach the other side where his friends were anxiously waiting for him.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29.

The ecstatic group had a celebration, and then they came back jubilantly to Kishkindha to report the good news to Sugriv, the king of the monkeys. Then they all went to Mt. Parbarshan where Lord Ram was staying at that time to report to him.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34.

The group's leader Jamvant, the bear king, briefed Lord Ram about the grand success of the mission, and that Sita had been found by Hanuman. Then the overwhelmed and grateful Lord thanked them all and affectionately embraced Hanuman, telling him that he would be indebted to him for the rest of his life. Hanuman briefly told him everything he had seen at Lanka and about the precarious condition of Sita, that though she was alive but she is living a life of hell. He urged the Lord not to waste any more time to start the final mission to free her and punish her tormentors.]

सेन समेति जथा रघुबीरा । उतरे जाइ बारिनिधि तीरा ॥ ७ ॥

मिला बिभीषन जेहि बिधि आई । सागर निग्रह कथा सुनाई ॥ ८ ॥

sēna samēti jathā raghubīrā. utarē jā'i bārinidhi tīrā. 7.

milā bibhīṣana jēhi bidhi ā'ī. sāgara nigraha kathā sunā'ī. 8.

Kaagbhusund then narrated how Lord Ram collected and assembled the huge army (of monkeys and bears)¹ and went to pitch a camp on the ocean's shore². (7)

Then he described why and how Ravana's brother Vibhishan came to take refuge with the Lord³, and then proceeded to narrate why and how Lord Ram subjugated the mighty ocean⁴ (8).

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.

Lord Ram instructed Sugriv to assemble an army so that they can start for Lanka immediately. A huge and formidable army was collected at short notice, and it consisted of fierce monkeys and bears of all denominations from all the corners of the earth. The army was so huge that it stretched till the horizon.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 35 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 8-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-8.

As the Lord's army moved along the surface of the earth, a huge storm of dust was raised that blanketed the sky. The monkeys and bears roared and yelled defeaningly. The earth shook; the mountains swayed; the ocean swirled; the celestial holders of the earth, such as the Tortoise which is said to hold the earth on its back, the Diggajas (elephants) who hold the earth from its corners, and the Serpent who holds the earth on its hood, all of them squirmed and turned on their backs.

The Lord arrived on the northern edge of the ocean and pitched his camp there. The monkey and bear warriors roamed around eating fruits from the trees that existed anywhere in the vicinity.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.

Meanwhile at Lanka, there was panic ever since Hanuman had set it on fire and destroyed a substantial part of the demon army. The omens were not good. Amongst those who tried to convince Ravana that the line he had adopted would be

ruinous for all of them was his brother Vibhishan. He tried to persuade Ravana to make peace with Lord Ram and return Sita to him. Ravana got provoked, accused Vibhishan of treachery and sedition, and kicked him out of Lanka. Fearing for his life, Vibhishan fled and came to seek refuge with Lord Ram, which was granted immediately and with a lot of warmth. The Lord went to the extent of symbolically anointing him on the throne of Lanka as its next king. This was a strategic move by the Lord to ensure Vibhishan's loyalty as well as a gesture to reward him for his services to the Lord.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 50 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it, and then from Doha no. 57—to Doha no. 59.

The next big hurdle was the ocean: the question was how to cross it and reach Lanka. Lord Ram did not want to insult the 'King of Water' as the ocean was known, and therefore tried to request him to give him passage through it. The Lord offered prayers to the ocean, but the latter was stubborn. So finally the Lord drew his arrow to dry it up forever. The marine creatures panicked and there was a huge turmoil in the waters of the ocean, forcing their Lord, the 'King of the Waters', to gather some gifts as a tribute and pray to Lord Ram to excuse him. Of course the Lord forgave him, and the Lord of the Ocean advised Lord Ram to construct a bridge across the surface of the water to connect to Lanka. He promised to Lord Ram that he would not wipe it away.]

दो०. सेतु बाँधि कपि सेन जिमि उतरी सागर पार ।

गयउ बसीठी बीरबर जेहि बिधि बालिकुमार ॥ ६७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

sētu bāmdhi kapi sēna jimi utarī sāgara pāra.

gaya'u basīṭhī bīrabara jēhi bidhi bālikumāra. 67 (a).

Kaagbhusund then narrated how the monkey army built a sturdy bridge and landed on the other side of the mighty ocean¹.

Then he narrated how the heroic son of Baali (i.e. Angad, the crown prince of Kishkindha) went as an envoy to the court of Ravana (because Lord Ram sent him as a last minute attempt to avoid a bloody war)². (Doha no. 67-a)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 60; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 5; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

When the King of the Waters, i.e. the ocean in a personified form, appeared before Lord Ram to surrender and pay his tributes, the Lord asked him for a practical solution by which the vast army of monkeys would easily be able to cross the formidable stretch of fathomless and heaving body of water that spread before them. The ocean advised the Lord that there were two monkey brothers named Nal and Neel in the army who were blessed by a boon during their childhood days that even huge boulders as large as entire hills would float on the surface of water if they touched them. This boon should now be used to construct a bridge over the surface of the water of the ocean.

Thereafter, the army of hundreds and thousands of monkeys and bears got on the job in right earnest, bringing rocks, boulders and hills of all sizes and contours and throwing them on the surface of the water of the ocean. By the touch of Nal and Neel these rocks and boulders floated on the surface. It is also believed that Hanuman had scribbled the holy name of Lord Ram on each of these pieces of rocks and boulders so that they did not sink—because Hanuman knew about the glory and the stupendous mystical powers of the holy name of the Lord, that it is so powerful that it enables a creature to cross over this huge and most intractable ocean-like world of mundane existence without any effort and provides the creature's with deliverance, so he guessed that it would be no wonder if these inconsequential rocks and boulders too floated and allowed the army to cross over this physical ocean.

By-and-by, the bridge spanning the distance of 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles or so) between the northern shore of the ocean and where it touched the soil of Lanka was established. Then Lord Ram offered his obeisance to Lord Shiva, his revered deity, before the army jubilantly advanced across this bridge. All the marine creatures emerged from the bottom of the ocean to marvel at this spectacle. The army finally landed on the other side and pitched camp on the slopes and summit of a hill by the name of Subel (refer: Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11).

As promised, the ocean did not break the bridge.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 35.

The always merciful, compassionate and forgiving Lord Ram was not interested in shedding blood unnecessarily. So he wished to explore the chances of avoiding the forthcoming ruinous war. A meeting was called and it was decided to send Angad as an emissary of the Lord to the court of Ravana in a last-ditch attempt to make a workable truce.

When Angad entered the city, the demon citizens of Lanka were scared out of their wits because they had not forgotten their bitter experience of a little while ago when Hanuman had gone berserk and wreaked havoc on them. So Angad got an easy right-of-way to the palace of the demon king Ravana where there was a heated and acrimonious exchange of angry words between him and Ravana. Each used insulting language for each other, and when Angad ultimately found that Ravana is not amenable and is overcome by the shadow of death, he was so enraged that he put his foot firmly down on the ground in the name of Lord Ram with a challenge to Ravana that if he managed to move his leg it would be deemed that the latter has won the war!

One must be in awe of Angad's confidence in the 'self' as well as in the glory and divinity of Lord Ram that he did not think twice before making this vow. One must praise Angad for the fact that since he was on the side of the 'truth and righteousness' he was self-confident and convinced that no evil force would be ever able to as much as move his single hair, what to talk of moving his leg. It surely proves Angad's strong faith and firm belief in the supremacy of Lord Ram, in the power of the Lord's holy name, and in his personal devotion and dedication for the Lord that made him sure that whatever decision he would make would be accepted by the Lord without raising an eyebrow! Such is indeed the power that a devotee and a faithful follower of the Lord possesses that whatever actions and decisions he would take in the name of the Lord would never go wrong, and the Lord would endorse it.

Meanwhile, Ravana failed to move Angad's foot, and as he bowed down to touch Angad's foot, his crown fell on the ground. Angad kicked this crown so fiercely that it flew like a ball and landed at the place Lord Ram was seated. This single

incidence of Ravana not being able to move Angad's foot and his crown falling to the ground was the proverbial last straw that broke the camel's back by demoralising the entire demon army and forewarning them of the impending disaster. Refer: Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 32 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-10; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 35.

In all sooth and without gainsay, this was a great moral victory for the whole of the monkey and bear army, and the most humiliating experience that the demons and Ravana had ever since they began ruling over the world.]

निसिचर कीस लराई बरनिसि बिबिधि प्रकार ।

कुंभकरन घननाद कर बल पौरुष संघार ॥ ६७ (ख) ॥

nisicara kīsa larāī baranisi bibidhi prakāra.

kumbhakarana ghananāda kara bala pauruṣa saṅghāra. 67 (b).

Thereafter the war between the demons (Ravana's army) and monkeys (Ram's army) was described in detail and in different ways¹.

Kumbhkaran (the brother of Ravana)² and Meghnad (his son)³ were eventually killed in battle. (Doha no. 67-b).

[Note—¹The no-holds-barred ferocious and blood-curdling war between the two sides has been extensively described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 103.

²The death of Kumbhakaran has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71.

Kumbhakaran was a younger brother of Ravana, and elder to Vibhishan. When Laxman was revived after being severely wounded by Meghanad, Ravana was alarmed. He went and woke up Kumbhakaran from his slumber and briefed him about the events. It so happened that Kumbhakaran was unaware of the whole thing till that point of time as he was accustomed to eating and drinking heavily and sleeping for long periods at a stretch. When he came to know about the developments, he admonished Ravana and told him that whatever he had done was wrong. However, Kumbhakaran said that he would be loyal to the demon race and fight on its behalf although it was wrong to do so. Then followed a fierce battle between Kumbhakaran and Lord Ram, and it culminated in the former's death. At the time of his death, Kumbhakaran's soul emerged from inside his body and entered the body of Lord Ram in the form of a bright shaft of light (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 of Lanka Kand).

The only other demon that had this privilege whereby his soul merged with the Supreme Soul of this creation in a visible way was Ravana himself (refer: Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103 of Lanka Kand).

³The death of Meghanad has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 76.

Meghanad was the son of Ravana. He was a valorous and virtually invincible demon warrior who had even captured Indra, the king of gods. He got his name from the fact that when he roared or yelled it was so deafening that it sounded like the clap of thunder. It was he who had shot and wounded Laxman. After the latter was revived he once again challenged Meghanad, and in the ensuing battle that saw Meghanad employing magical tricks, the final victory was won by Laxman who shot and killed his enemy Meghanad.]

चौ०. निसिचर निकर मरन बिधि नाना । रघुपति रावन समर बखाना ॥ १ ॥

रावन बध मंदोदरि सोका । राज बिभीषन देव असोका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nisicara nikara marana bidhi nānā. raghupati rāvana samara bakhānā. 1.
rāvana badha mandōdari sōkā. rāja bibhīṣana dēva asōkā. 2.

Continuing with his narration, Kaagbhusund then described the extermination of the army of demons, and the battle between Lord Ram & Ravana¹. (1)

This battle and the war in general ended with the slaying of Ravana². Then he narrated how Mandodari, the queen of the demon race and the wife of Ravana, lamented, wailed and grieved upon learning of the demise of her husband³.

The crown and the throne of Lanka was given to Vibhishan who was made the King (as promised earlier by Lord Ram)⁴, and then Kaagbhusund described the scene of celebration and jubilation that followed the Lord's victory which made the Gods fearless from the terror of their arch enemy Ravana and his kith and kin and army⁵. (2)

[Note—¹The slaying of the demon army is described throughout the narration of the war that spreads across verses in Lanka Kand of the epic Ram Charit Manas. However, since the focus here is on the part of the war that followed Meghanad's death when Ravana directly led the battle himself and died in the end, one can refer specially to Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Doha no. 101.

²Ravana's death has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 102—to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 103.

As has been noted earlier in regard to Kumbhakaran's death, Ravana's soul emerged from his body and entered Lord Ram's body in a symbolic development that showed that his individual 'self' merged with the Supreme Self to become one with the Supreme Being who was in the form of Lord Ram. The fact that this happened shows that inspite of all the external things that Ravana did and said, internally he was pure at heart, was self-realised and enlightened, and his was a holy soul—because otherwise this supreme form of destiny would not have been possible for him. To be able to become one with the Lord is the ultimate objective of all spiritual endeavours, but rarely one succeeds in attaining it.

It also shows the great purity and spiritual welfare that come automatically to a person by remembering Lord Ram—for even a vile demon such as Ravana found

deliverance and emancipation for his soul by just remembering Lord Ram day and night, though he did it out of enmity and ill-will for the Lord.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede Doha no. 104, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha.

Mandodari was a wise wife; she had on several occasions tried to bring Ravana to his senses, but his arrogance and ego prevented him from heeding her advice. When her husband died, she grieved sorely but acknowledged publicly that Ravana himself is to be blamed for the calamity that befell the clan. She even praised Lord Ram to have provided a glorious death to her evil husband by destroying his gross evil body of a demon and liberating his soul so that it could merge with the Lord's own Supreme Soul (refer: Doha no. 104). All the gods and holy spirits that had assembled on the occasion lauded Mandodari for her wisdom.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

Like in the case of Sugriv, Lord Ram did not himself enter the city of Lanka but sent his brother Laxman to represent him and anoint Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka as its future king. The Lord thus kept his promise to Vibhishan that was made when he had come to seek refuge with him (refer: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 49).

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-11 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 103.

The Gods had been watching the entire proceedings from the sky. When the final victory was Lord Ram's, all of them joined in chorus to pray to the Lord and honour him.]

सीता रघुपति मिलन बहोरी । सुरन्ह कीन्हि अस्तुति कर जोरी ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि पुष्पक चढ़ि कपिन्ह समेता । अवध चले प्रभु कृपा निकेता ॥ ४ ॥

sītā raghupati milana bahōrī. suranha kīnhi astuti kara jōrī. 3.
puni puṣpaka caḍhi kapinha samētā. avadha calē prabhu kṛpā nikētā. 4.

Then he (Kaagbhusund) described the meeting of Sita with Lord Ram¹, and how the Gods sang Lord Ram's glories and praised him with each of them joining the palms of his hands as a gesture of showing reverence and respect to the Lord². (3)

Thereafter, Lord Ram mounted the air-plane called "Pushpak" with other monkeys and proceeded towards his capital of Ayodhya³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 109.

After the victory in the war and the coronation of Vibhishan as the king of Lanka, Lord Ram sent Hanuman to Lanka to bring Sita back to him. She was escorted with full royal honours by the guards of Vibhishan. When the Lord saw the ceremonial procession, he asked them to bring Sita in an ordinary way and not to show any favour to her. This was in line with the Lord's view that till the exact end of

the fourteen year period, they—the Lord himself, his wife Sita and brother Laxman—were to live like a hermit. No special treatment should be shown to any of them.

The meeting of Sita with Lord Ram, however, was clouded by some bitter moments. The Lord wished to ensure that no aspersions are cast at a later date on his or Sita's purity and immaculacy of character or their integrity by an evil world which is ever eager to jump to scandalous conclusions by explicitly proving to the world that Sita was uncorrupt and as chaste and immaculate as she was prior to her abduction by Ravana. He did not want tongues wagging and suspicions aroused for no rhyme or reason. So it is better to nip the dirty gossiping in the bud right then and there.

Hence, Lord Ram asked Sita to prove her integrity by the 'fire test', which means she was to enter a blazing fire and emerge unscathed to prove that she was not touched by any evil hands, and was pure and chaste. Of course she did this willingly, and the Lord and Sita were united.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 110—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116.

All the Gods, including the senior ones amongst them such as Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder, Indra the king of Gods, as well as the great sages and seers and mystics, who had been following the war on the ground from their stations in the sky, revealed themselves to offer their obeisance and prayers to Lord Ram.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 118—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119.

Vibhishan filled the air-plane called 'Pushpak' with gems and jewels and brought it to Lord Ram to pay tribute and to gift it to the Lord. The Lord asked him to go to the sky and overturn its contents—i.e. the gems and the jewels—so that the monkeys and bears could take what they wanted.

Then the Lord assembled them and thanked them all for helping him. He asked the monkeys and bears to go back home as their own kith and kin would be waiting for them. The Lord then expressed his desire to return to his own capital of Ayodhya as the time was running out and the period of fourteen years was coming to an end. He was worried about Bharat, that if he delayed for even one day Bharat would lay down his life as he had vowed in Chitrakoot. Taking the land route back home would take a long time; so the only way out was to travel by air on the Pushpak plane.

The chief commanders of the monkey-and-bear army, such as Sugriv, Angad, Nal, Neel, Jamvant and Hanuman, as well as Vibhishan, who was the demon king, requested the Lord to accompany him. They all boarded the air-plane, and it lifted into the sky amidst thunderous applause.]

जेहि बिधि राम नगर निज आए । बायस बिसद चरित सब गाए ॥ ५ ॥

कहेसि बहोरि राम अभिषेका । पुर बरनत नृपनीति अनेका ॥ ६ ॥

jēhi bidhi rāma nagara nija ā'ē. bāyasa bisada carita saba gā'ē. 5.

kahēsi bahōri rāma abhiṣēkā. pura baranata nrpanīti anēkā. 6.

Kaagbhusund then described how Lord Ram reached Ayodhya¹, and sang all other mystical and respectful deeds done by the Lord². (5)

After that he described Lord Ram's coronation as the King of Ayodhya³, and his rules of polity and ideology as he ruled the kingdom with great righteousness, probity and propriety⁴. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 121; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

As the air-plane moved towards Ayodhya, Lord Ram showed Sita and all his other companions the landmarks on the ground that marked important places during the Lord's journey from Ayodhya to Lanka.

Once he was over the sky of Ayodhya, he asked Hanuman to assume the form of a Brahmin and go to the city to inform Bharat about the Lord's arrival. Meanwhile, as soon as the word spread of the sighting of the plane and the arrival of a messenger of the Lord, celebrations broke out in the city. Every citizen rushed out to the outskirts of the city where the plane landed on the ground.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Doha no. 11.

The Lord met his brothers Bharat and Shatrughan, as well as his teacher and chief priest of the kingdom, sage Vasistha. Then he met each single citizen of the city individually, embraced each one of them and asked for his welfare—which was a wondrous and a miraculous feat because hundreds and thousands of them had assembled to greet the Lord. Then he entered the city and met his mothers and other members of the household. He paid special attention to Kaikeyi and paid his respects to her to assuage her feelings and tell her that he harbours no ill-will against her at all.

The Lord introduced all his companions who had accompanied him from Lanka to his brothers and other family members, to sage Vasistha as well as to all his ministers, emphasising his gratitude for them and telling them all that it was due to them that he had defeated his enemy and come back home alive. This noble gesture of thanks-giving and expression of gratitude for monkeys, bears and demons whom the Lord called his 'dear friends' was appreciated by one and all.

The city was decorated and lighted up. The gloom and despair of the past fourteen years was replaced with joy, merriment, exhilaration, jubilation and celebration in great abundance.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 20.

Lord Ram was crowned as the Sovereign of the vast empire of Ayodhya. All the great sages and seers of the time had assembled there to bless the Lord, as did the Gods including the creator Brahma, the concluder Shiva, and the Vedas, the scriptures, in a personified form, to pay their obeisance and reverence to the Lord.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 31.

Lord Ram ruled the realm in an exemplarily righteous, proper and rightful manner in accordance to the principles of Dharma (the laws and regulations that govern right action, right deed, right behaviour, right thought and right life). There was peace, happiness and prosperity everywhere; no one suffered from diseases or want of any thing. All were given justice, treated alike, and all loved their Lord and led a righteous life like him.]

कथा समस्त भुसुंड बखानी । जो मैं तुम्ह सन कही भवानी ॥ ७ ॥
सुनि सब राम कथा खगनाहा । कहत बचन मन परम उछाहा ॥ ८ ॥

kathā samasta bhusuṇḍa bakhānī. jō mair̥ tumha sana kahī bhavānī.
suni saba rāma kathā khaganāhā. kahata bacana mana parama uchāhā. 4.

This is how Kaagbhusund narrated the whole sacred life-story of Lord Ram to Garud, the king of birds.

Then Lord Shiva told his consort Parvati, who was also known by the name of Bhavani, 'Oh Bhavani! It was the same story that I have told you¹.' (7)

When the king of birds Garud heard the entire story of Lord Ram, he was filled with exhilaration and felt very ecstatic. He said to the crow-saint Kaagbhusund as follows—(8)

[Note—¹The divine and sacred story of Lord Ram was first conceived in the heart of Lord Shiva, and when his consort Parvati approached him to narrate this story to her then Lord Shiva described it to her from the beginning to the end.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 35, and later on at various other places such as (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Doha no. 111, and (iii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121 where this fact is explicitly mentioned.]

सो०. गयउ मोर संदेह सुनेउँ सकल रघुपति चरित ।

भयउ राम पद नेह तव प्रसाद बायस तिलक ॥ ६८ (क) ॥

sōraṭhā.

gaya'u mōra sandēha sunē'um̐ sakala raghupati carita.
bhaya'u rāma pada nēha tava prasāda bāyasa tilaka. 68 (a).

[Garud said—] 'All my doubts and delusions have now been removed after hearing the entire sacred and divine story of Lord Raghupati (literally, the "Lord of the Raghu's line of Kings", here referring to Lord Ram).

Oh the most exalted and blessed Crow (bāyasa tilaka)! By your grace and blessings I have developed devotion and faith in the holy feet of Lord Ram. (Sortha no. 68-a)

मोहि भयउ अति मोह प्रभु बंधन रन महुँ निरखि ।

चिदानंद संदोह राम बिकल कारन कवन ॥ ६८ (ख) ॥

mōhi bhaya'u ati mōha prabhu bandhana rana mahum̐ nirakhi.
cidānanda sandōha rāma bikala kārana kavana. 68 (b).

When I had seen Lord Ram getting trapped by the snare of serpents in the battle-field of Lanka, I was utterly confused and overcome with mighty doubts about the reality of the Lord¹.

I wondered how can the Lord who is believed to be eternally free from all delusions, who is beyond the entanglements so characteristic of mundane existence in this gross perishable world, who is eternally blissful and knowledge personified, be ever trapped by gross things of the world (such as getting ensnared by a long rope consisting of snakes, and after getting thus trapped feel anguished and worried so much so that he could not free himself and had to rely upon my help to set him free). I wondered—what is the cause of it; how come this happened; why did the Lord get trapped, and why couldn't he free himself and called out to me to help him? (Sortha 68-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 10-13 that precede Doha no. 73, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 10 that follow it together with Doha no. 74 that completes the picture.

During the thick of battle at Lanka, Meghanad, the son of Ravana, became extremely angry and put to use all the magical tricks-of-battle he knew about. He went into the sky and shot a mysterious weapon at Lord Ram. This weapon immediately transformed into long serpents, and they wrapped themselves around the body of the Lord. Now it must be remembered, as has been clarified earlier also, that Lord Ram did not want to divulge his true identity as the almighty Supreme Being because that would have alerted the demons and they would have either surrendered before the Lord or fled somewhere to hide. In this eventuality, the very purpose of the Lord coming down all the way from heaven to earth and then traversing on foot such a long distance and undertaking such an arduous journey from Ayodhya to Lanka would have been made null and void. Hence, though the Lord could have easily broken free from this snare of snakes, he desisted from doing so.

Meanwhile, the celestial sage Narad sent Garud to free the Lord by eating the snakes. It is believed that since that time, the snakes are terrified of Garud. However, Garud was confused and overcome by doubt because he knew the might of his Lord Vishnu—that he was invincible, and no power in creation could ever overcome him. So if Lord Ram was indeed Lord Vishnu as he had heard and was made to believe, Garud wondered how come ordinary snakes tied him down, and how come he could not free himself?

This incidence weighed heavily on the mind of Garud and by-and-by led him to the hermitage of sage Kaagbhusund where everything was explained to him. So his confusions and doubts about the divine reality of Lord Ram were removed.

Garud himself acknowledges why he got confused in the next verses herein below.]

चौ०. देखि चरित अति नर अनुसारी । भयउ हृदयँ मम संसय भारी ॥ १ ॥

सोइ भ्रम अब हित करि मैं माना । कीन्ह अनुग्रह कृपानिधाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi carita ati nara anusārī. bhaya'u hr̥dayam̐ mama sansaya bhārī. 1.
sō'i bhrama aba hita kari mair̥m mār̥nā. kīnha anugraha krpānidhānā. 2.

Garud told Kaagbhusund, 'When I observed Lord Ram behaving like an ordinary human being, I was extremely bewildered; a lot of doubt overwhelmed my heart (and mind) regarding the reality and the truth of who Lord Ram actually was¹. (1)

Now I realise that error of judgement was for my own good, and I feel that the all-merciful Lord had bestowed a favour on me by creating that delusion². (2)

[Note—¹Refer to the note appended to Doha no. 68-b herein above for details. Garud was confused because all the while he thought that his Lord Vishnu, who was the almighty and omnipotent Lord of the world, had revealed himself in the physical form of Lord Ram. So he just could not reconcile this fact with the way Lord Ram was fighting the war on the ground, getting wounded and trapped by a magical snare created by his opponent. How can this happen, wondered Garud; why did the Lord not break through this snare on his own but needed Garud's help to do so?

It is to be noted here that bewilderment, perplexity and doubts are such negative things that as soon as they manage to get a foothold in one's mind and heart, all wisdom and discriminatory powers to make correct judgement and assess things with the right and proper perspective are eclipsed. In the present context this principle applies especially to Garud who had doubts about Lord Ram's divinity, whether he was an ordinary human being or the Supreme Lord himself in that form. Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 119 where this principle is endorsed by Lord Shiva himself.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 62 where Lord Shiva has said the same thing—that he understood that Garud had shown some sense of pride on some earlier occasion and the merciful Lord wished to clean Garud of this negative trait, and that is why the Lord caused him to be overcome with delusions so that he would be forced to hear the divine story of the Lord being narrated by some humble bird of his own race so his pride of being exalted and senior would disappear. This is the primary reason why Lord Shiva had sent Garud to the hermitage of the saintly crow Kaagbhusund. The other reason of course was that it would be easier for Garud, who was a 'bird' by birth, though of a noble stature as he was the mount of Lord Vishnu, to understand the language of another bird, in this case the 'crow' Kaagbhusund. Refer: Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 62.

Garud now realised that the Lord wanted him to spend some quality time in the holy community of saints where the Lord's divine stories and glories are narrated and explained in detail with a lot of devotion. This would also enable Garud to enjoy the spiritual bliss that comes in the holy and purified environment of such places, and to dip himself in the sacred water of spiritual blessedness and beatitude that is the natural reward of having communion with saints and pious souls.

Garud explains this himself in the following verses.]

जो अति आतप व्याकुल होई । तरु छाया सुख जानइ सोई ॥ ३ ॥

जौ नहिं होत मोह अति मोही । मिलतेउँ तात कवन बिधि तोही ॥ ४ ॥

jō ati ātapa byākula hō'ī. taru chāyā sukha jāna'i sō'ī. 3.
jauriṁ nahiriṁ hōta mōha ati mōhī. milatē'um' tāta kavana bidhi tōhī. 4.

[Giving an example, he says:] 'When anyone is suffering by the oppressive heat of the sun, it is only then that he realises the comfort and solace that is found under the shade of a leafy tree. (3)

My dear (Kaagbhusund), if I had not been deluded and tormented by mental perplexities, how could and why would have I got an opportunity to come and meet you¹? (4)

[Note—¹To wit, if I was at peace with my self, if I had not suffered mental torments, why would I have gone to sage Narad to seek an answer to the question that had vexed me. The wise celestial sage then directed me to the creator Brahma, who then sent me to Lord Shiva, and finally I came to you upon his advice. On this pretext I had had the opportunity to meet Narad, Brahma, Shiva, and now you, the Exalted One.

I feel I am so lucky and blessed. I now feel that my merciful Lord Vishnu wished to use the spare time that I had while he was away from heaven, and was present on earth in the form of Lord Ram to accomplish the task of the Gods, to some good use that would be for my own spiritual welfare, instead of wasting it away idling in the heaven waiting for the Lord's return. So he managed the things in such a way that I got confused and finally came to you to spend my time in blissful spiritual ecstasy in your company.]

सुनतेउँ किमि हरि कथा सुहाई । अति बिचित्र बहु बिधि तुम्ह गाई ॥ ५ ॥
निगमागम पुरान मत एहा । कहहिं सिद्ध मुनि नहिं संदेहा ॥ ६ ॥

sunatē'um' kimi hari kathā suhā'ī. ati bicitra bahu bidhi tumha gā'ī. 5.
nigamāgama purāna mata ēhā. kahahiriṁ sid'dha muni nahiriṁ sandēhā. 6.

If it not had been for my delusions and confusions, how and why would I have (come to you and) heard the divine story of Lord Ram that is so wondrous and pleasant to hear, and which you have described in such finery from different angles, narrating its various aspects and fascinating details. (5)

Indeed and without gainsay, the Vedas and the Purans as well as the learned sages and mystics assert in an unequivocal term that --- (6)

संत बिसुद्ध मिलहिं परि तेही । चितवहिं राम कृपा करि जेही ॥ ७ ॥
राम कृपाँ तव दरसन भयऊ । तव प्रसाद सब संसय गयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

santa bisud'dha milahiriṁ pari tēhī. citavahiriṁ rāma kṛpā kari jēhī. 7.
rāma kṛpām' tava darasana bhaya'ū. tava prasāda saba sansaya gaya'ū. 8.

--- True and self-realised saints and pious people are accessible only to those on whom Lord Ram is gracious and pleased, who are looked upon with favour by the Lord. (7)

Truly, it is by the grace of Lord Ram that I had been fortunate enough to have your blessed sight, to have met you, and it is by your grace that all my doubts and bewilderments have now disappeared¹.’ (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 61 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it where Lord Shiva has asserted that the Lord’s divine stories cannot be heard except in the company of saints, that without hearing this glorious story delusions and bewilderments cannot go away, and without this happening one cannot develop steady affection and true devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram. No other method such as doing Yoga (meditation), Yagya (religious sacrifices), Tapa (austerities and penances), Gyan (acquisition of truthful knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) would help the creature in this respect.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7 where Vibhishan has said the same thing when he met Hanuman; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45 where Lord Ram has himself asserted this principle.]

दो०. सुनि बिहंगपति बानी सहित बिनय अनुराग ।

पुलक गात लोचन सजल मन हरषेउ अति काग ॥ ६९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

sunī bihaṅgapati bānī sahita binaya anurāga.

pulaka gāta lōcana sajala mana haraṣē'u ati kāga. 69 (a).

On hearing the words of the King of Birds, i.e. Garud, that were spoken with great reverence, humility and affection, the ‘crow’ (Kaagbhusund) became thrilled in his body and tears welled-up in his eyes even as he felt extremely exhilarated in his Mana (mind and heart) and rejoiced exceedingly. (Doha no. 69-a)

श्रोता सुमति सुसील सुचि कथा रसिक हरि दास ।

पाइ उमा अति गोप्यमपि सज्जन करहिं प्रकास ॥ ६९ (ख) ॥

śrōtā sumati susīla suci kathā rasika hari dāsa.

pā'i umā ati gōpyamapi sajjana karahim prakāsa. 69 (b).

[Lord Shiva told his consort—] ‘Oh Uma! When a saintly speaker (a teacher or a learned preacher—“sajjana”) finds a listener who, besides being intelligent, wise, courteous, virtuous and possessing excellent characters, is also a devotee of Lord Hari, has deep interest in and is fond of hearing the divine story of the Lord, then the speaker feels enthused and is encouraged to willingly divulge even the profoundest of secrets pertaining to the Lord to the listener, without having any reservations¹. (Doha no. 69-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 74 where we read that Kaagbhusund has also endorsed this view of Garud, saying that he has narrated the full story of Lord Ram without concealing anything. He did so because he found that Garud was blessed by Lord Ram, because he had a deep interest in learning about the glories of the Lord, because he had devotion and affection for the Lord. All these traits in Garud had pleased Kaagbhusund so much that the latter chose to reveal the story with all its intricacies to the former.

‘Without any reservations’ implies that the preacher or the teacher has no apprehension in his mind about the intention of the listener or the latter’s ability to fully and clearly understand what is being said, and grasp the details in the correct way and in the correct perspective. The teacher or the preacher wants to be sure that the listener would not mock him, deride or ridicule him later on for certain things that may not appear appealing to the listener or may not conform to his or her way of thinking, religious belief or view of life and the world. The teacher or the preacher also wishes to make it sure that the concepts and principles, whether apparent or implied, whether esoteric or common-place, as taught and preached by him are not misinterpreted or misrepresented or twisted by the hearer so as to kill the very spirit and intent of the discourse.]

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PART—2

[Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

चौ०. बोलेउ काकभसुंड बहोरी । नभग नाथ पर प्रीति न थोरी ॥ १ ॥

सब बिधि नाथ पूज्य तुम्ह मेरे । कृपापात्र रघुनायक केरे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bōlē'u kākabhasuṇḍa bahōrī. nabhaga nātha para prīti na thōrī. 1.

saba bidhi nātha pūjya tumha mērē. kṛpāpātra raghunāyaka kērē. 2.

Kaagbhusund—who had no small affection for the ‘Lord of all the air-borne creatures’ (i.e. Garud, the King of Birds: “nabhaga nātha”)—said once again (as follows) : --- (1)

‘Oh my Lord! You are honourable and praiseworthy for me by all counts. Indeed you are the blessed one with whom Lord Raghunaayak (Sri Ram) is pleased; you are the blessed one to have won the grace of Lord Ram. [And this is also one of the reasons why I have great respect for you.] (2)

तुम्हहि न संसय मोह न माया । मो पर नाथ कीन्हि तुम्ह दाया ॥ ३ ॥
पठइ मोह मिस खगपति तोही । रघुपति दीन्हि बड़ाई मोही ॥ ४ ॥

tumhahi na sansaya mōha na māyā. mō para nātha kīnhi tumha dāyā. 3.
paṭha'i mōha misa khagapati tōhī. raghupati dīnhi baṛā'ī mōhī. 4.

You do not have any trace of 'Sansaya' or 'Maya' in you. {'Sansaya' means doubts and confusions that arise due to delusions and ignorance. 'Maya' means delusions themselves that would lead to so many problems that are outlined in the forthcoming verses. Garud had doubts about the divinity of Lord Ram; who actually he was, whether he was an ordinary human being or was he the Supreme Lord in a human form? The sight on the battle-field had deluded and confused him. }

In fact oh Lord, you have been very gracious towards me (that you chose to come to my hermitage all the way from your abode in the heaven, and then shown so much respect to me inspite of the fact that you are my 'King' and I, being a 'bird' by birth, am a humble subject of your kingdom)¹. (3)

In fact, Lord Ram has given me great honour by sending you to me on the pretext or excuse that you have some kind of 'Moha' in you². {'Moha' means having a passion about certain thing and the dilemma and restlessness that arises as a consequence of it. Once he was torn between this and that, he developed a passion to find out the truth, and was overcome with anxiety and restlessness in this search. He lost his peace of mind and developed a heart-burn.} (4)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund told Garud: 'You have taken the trouble to come to my humble place to give me honour. You have heard the story of Lord Ram from me, thereby implying that I am the greatest and the most competent narrator of this divine story of the Lord anywhere in the world. You are the king of birds, and this is a rare honour that the king himself visits the place of one of his subjects to praise him. For this kind and gracious act of yours, I am sincerely obliged and grateful to you.

²I know that you are above the influences of Moha—because you are so close to Lord Vishnu. Anyone who is so close to the Lord, anyone who is so lucky that Lord Vishnu decides to keep him as one of his close aides, just cannot be touched by the shadow of Maya or its accompanying Moha.

Even Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself, has asserted that if a living being has 'Bhakti', or devotion and submission for the Lord, in his heart, the corrupting negative influences of Maya do not affect him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 85 along with its preceding Chuapai line nos. 3-8.

It ought to be noted here that both the teacher and the disciple, or both the speaker and his listener, viz. Kaagbhusund and Garud respectively, are showing mutual respect and expressing their courtesy for each other. The lesson to be learnt here is that this is the proper way a seeker should approach his teacher to learn something, and this is also the way the teacher should treat his disciple. They should both be humble, unpretentious and courteous towards each other. This helps them both—the teacher opens his treasury of knowledge for the benefit of his student, and

the latter feels free to ask any questions he or she has from the teacher, both having no reservations with the other.]

तुम्ह निज मोह कही खग साई । सो नहिं कछु आचरज गोसाई ॥ ५ ॥
 नारद भव बिरंचि सनकादी । जे मुनिनायक आतमबादी ॥ ६ ॥
 मोह न अंध कीन्ह केहि केही । को जग काम नचाव न जेही ॥ ७ ॥
 तृन्नाँ केहि न कीन्ह बौराहा । केहि कर हृदय क्रोध नहिं दाहा ॥ ८ ॥

tumha nija mōha kahī khagasā'īm. sō nahim kachu ācaraja gōsā'īm. 5.
 nārada bhava biran̄ci sanakādī. jē munināyaka ātamabādī. 6.
 mōha na andha kīnha kēhi kēhī. kō jaga kāma nacāva na jēhī. 7.
 tṛṣṇām̐ kēhi na kīnha baurāhā. kēhi kara hṛdaya krōdha nahim dāhā. 8.

Oh the King of Birds (khagasā'īm)! You said that you were overcome by 'Moha', but oh Lord (gōsā'īm) there is no surprise in it¹. [Why is it so? This question is answered from Chaupai line no. 6 onwards herein below.] (5)

But even if one accepts that you did have some sort of 'Moha' in you then there is no surprise in it as even the most exalted of souls were influenced by it.

For instance, the celestial sage Narad, Lord Shiva who is known by the name of Bhava, the creator Brahma who is also known as Viranchi, the learned celestial sages Sankadi etc. who are regarded as foremost amongst wise, self-realised and enlightened ones who are great exponents of the Truth and knowledgeable about the truth of the Self (the cosmic Consciousness; the universal Spirit; the Atma)--- (6)²

--- Even they were not spared by it (i.e. by Moha). Say, who amongst them were not blinded by 'Moha#' at some point of time? {Moha = worldly attachment, attraction, infatuation, longing.}

Is there anyone in this world who has not become a puppet in the hands of 'Kaam@', who has not danced to its tunes? {Kaam = passions, lust, yearning and desire for gratification, both worldly and sensual.} (7)

Similarly, who is not deluded and maddened by 'Trishna\$'? {Trishna = an unquenchable thirst, an excessive greed and longing for enjoyment of the pleasures and comforts of the material world and its sense objects.}

Once again, whose heart has not been scorched by the raging fire of 'Krodha*'? {Krodha = anger, wrathfulness, vengeance, indignation, fury etc.} (8)

[Note—¹There seems to be a contradiction between this Chaupai and the earlier Chaupai line no. 3 wherein Kaagbhusund had told Garud that the latter had no 'Sansaya, Maya or Moha' inside him. Well, a careful analysis shows that in the present Chaupai Kaagbhusund says that it was Garud who had said that he had 'Moha' in him, and *not* Kaagbhusund. The latter reminded Garud that he had himself acknowledged earlier that this Moha was a blessing-in-disguise for him and was for his own good as it helped him to come and hear the divine story of Lord Ram being narrated in a holy environment that bestowed peace and bliss to him—refer: Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 69 herein above.

²Now, from this Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70 right upto Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72, sage Kaagbhusund lists the ‘associates’ of Maya. He calls them Maya’s ‘family’—refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71. The different entities listed in these verses are the negative traits present in a person that indicate that he is under the spell of Maya, that he is deluded and restless, that he has lost his peace of mind and heart, that his reasoning and stability of mind are gone for a toss. He yearns for all those things that give him constant worries and sadness, and never does he ever think of those things that would give him eternal peace and bliss.

All the listed negative spiritual traits are closely associated and linked with Maya; they are therefore Maya’s family. They are visible indicators of the way maya negatively affects an individual.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 59 where sage Narad has told Garud that Maya is so powerful that it robs wisdom and analytical skills of even the greatest of wise men.

In other words, the power of ‘Maya’, the power of delusions, is so strong and overriding that no one can stand its onslaught. No one, no matter how learned and wise he may be such as the acclaimed sages named here, i.e. Narad and Sankaadi, or how exalted and divine he may be as represented by the two gods cited here, i.e. Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma who are the 1st and the 3rd gods of the Trinity—no one is immune to the influence of Maya.

The main idea here is that Maya and its different components are very powerful negative forces of creation that rarely exempt anyone from their influence. Does that mean that no one is free from the delusions created by ‘Maya’ and its representative known as ‘Moha’? Well, the answer is found at two places in the context of this conversation between sage Kaagbhusund and Garud.

The first is in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 47 where it is explicitly said that all vices such as ‘Lobha’ (greed), ‘Moha’ (infatuations), ‘Matsarya’ (envy and jealousy), ‘Mada’ (arrogance), ‘Mamta’ (affection and attachment), ‘Raag and Dwesh’ (attraction and hatred or repulsion)—all such negative traits live in the heart of an individual only as long as the sun of Lord Ram’s grace and devotion does not shine to illuminate the heart of a person and remove the darkness of ignorance from there.”

And the other is found in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43 where sage Narad has conceded that ‘Maya’ took over his heart when Lord Ram motivated it to do so. In other words, Maya acts only when Lord Ram wants it to act; Maya is in control of the Lord and can’t act independently. But there is one very important exemption here—and it is the ‘Viraat Purush’. He is no one else but a personified form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm in the Upanishads. His other name is Lord Vishnu who is the sustainer and protector of creation. He is the omnipresent, the omnipotent and the omniscient Lord of creation. It is he who had incarnated as Lord Ram in the present case. Whenever the creatures of this creation suffered, whenever the evil forces of creation became ascendant and began to crush the good and decimate noble values, the Supreme Lord of creation intervened and restored the balance.

To do this of course he has to employ various tricks in order to trap and defeat the negative forces because these forces do not obey any laws or conform to any standard patterns of behaviour. The disease has to be cured, and so the cosmic Doctor (Vishnu, the Supreme Lord) adapts himself according to the patient and his disease. But to the ordinary world it appears that often times even Vishnu becomes a victim of

Maya, but as reasoned above, it is merely a ploy to trap the evil and demonic forces, something which cannot be done by taking the straight path.

Let us take an example from the story of Ramayan to understand this point. Lord Vishnu had incarnated in a human form as Lord Ram, the prince of Ayodhya. Vishnu had to take a human form to eliminate the cruel, blood-thirsty and ferocious demons led by their king Ravana. For this purpose Ram had to create a situation that would give him an excuse and a chance to go and kill these demons. He did not wish to trouble others, so decided that his wife Sita would have to suffer a bit so that the larger good of the world can be done. Therefore, things were so manipulated that Sita was kidnapped by Ravana. This obviously gave Lord Ram an excuse to wage a war to liberate her from her captors. Every chance was given to Ravana to free Sita, but once it was certain that he would not do so, a fierce battle followed, and cruel demons were eliminated one by one with the war to free Sita as being merely an excuse.

Now, we read in the story that when at the time Sita was abducted, Lord Ram wailed and grieved and lamented for his dear wife, and even contemplated dying like an ordinary heart-broken lover. It appeared from all his demeanours that he was a lustful man overcome with grief due to separation from his loving wife. But this was only to disguise the reality of his true identity as an incarnation of Vishnu—because if the demons got a hint that their death was at Ram's hands, they would have either returned Sita or would have scampared to hide somewhere. If that happened, the entire exercise would have failed.

So, whatever way Lord Ram behaved was just for show. Actually, 'Maya' had not affected him.

Lord Ram has also listed these negative traits to sage Narad in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43.

#Moha—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 47.

The word 'Moha' refers to the misconceived and ill-advised attachment and attraction that a creature develops for things in this world which are artificial and transient in nature because of the simple fact that this world itself is temporary and perishable.

'Moha' literally traps a person in ignorance-induced delusions leading to worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments and passions. This trap ensnares him in a tight web, and prevents his liberation and deliverance. This happens only till the time he is veiled by ignorance and in his stupidity thinks to be wise, and therefore never attempts to find out the truth; he remains contented being ignorant in his fallacious belief that ignorance is bliss! There is no bigger stupidity than this. So a wise person endeavours to understand the real and truthful nature of the world behind the façade which is nevertheless false and misleading. He realises and sees the supreme Brahm everywhere, in all the creatures. Consequentially, all become equal in his eyes. He becomes humble and pious; he loses his haughtiness and arrogance; he becomes merciful, gracious and kind towards all.

Secondly, a wise person realises the falsehood of this perishable world, the futility of pursuing it blindly. He understands that he is merely a player in the hands of the cosmic Lord. He should concentrate his energy of serving the Lord's creation selflessly without expecting any return. So, when there is no involvement in the world and the deeds are done without any hopes, all the reasons for agitations and frustrations vanish. There is no fear of failure and there is no competitor to beat. This

allays all sorrows, sufferings, grief and miseries that continuously torment a creature who has not overcome 'Moha'.

The concept of 'Moha' has been explained in *Ishavasya Upanishad*, verse no. 7 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition in these words—"In that realised and erudite state of enlightenment, when an exalted person becomes acquainted with and convinced of the truth about that supreme, transcendental Lord (that he pervades the entire creation uniformly and universally), all the creatures then become an image of that Supreme Being for him. In that exalted and enlightened state of mind when that person witnesses the Lord everywhere in a non-dual form (i.e. when he sees no distinction between the supreme, almighty, macrocosmic Lord and the humble, meek and microcosmic individual because both are an image of one another), what delusions and doubts, what confusions and consternations remain for him? [That is, no attachments or infatuations would affect him, and therefore there will be no cause for sorrows, sufferings and grief on separation from his dear ones, or jealousy and hatred due to worldly mundane causes. He goes beyond such lowly, denigrating and pervert emotions. Consequentially, he attains beatitude and felicity; equanimity and magnanimity become his hallmark.]"

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 66 describes Moha as a 'Granthi' or hard nut to crack or a knot that is difficult to untie as follows—"The aspirant's next hurdle to be overcome in the spiritual path is 'Moha Granthi': the hard nut-like knot that represents numerous attachments to and infatuation with the sense objects of the material world, longing for them and having a strong desire to acquire them and enjoy them—which together act like formidable spiritual blocks or knots or hurdles that need be dismantled or overcome before a spiritual aspirant can actually claim true freedom from the fetters of this world.

This Moha Granthi is such a hard nut to crack that it is made possible to do so only by the good influences of auspicious deeds and thoughts brought forward from one's past, as well as by the grace of an enlightened Guru (moral preceptor, guide and teacher) (66)."

The negative virtues of having 'Moha' is usually applied in relation to the material sense objects of the world, but it also relates to one's attachment with the body, with other people around him, as well as to acquire name, fame and wealth. Moha also means delusions and its attending horrible spiritual consequences. Moha acts like a veil that obscures the truth from being viewed by the man. It leads him to commit errors and sins inadvertently because he is not even aware that he is acting wrongly. His mind is biased, deluded and corrupted. 'Moha' is therefore like a formidable Granthi or knot because it is hard to crack like a nut.

A similar idea is expressed in Tulsidas' wonderful Book of Prayers known as *Vinai Patrika*, in its verse no. 117, stanza no. 2, which says—"I know that it is futile to pursue the material objects of the world and to remain engrossed in gratifying the urges of the sense organs of the body. I know that this is like voluntarily falling in the dark pit of ignorance and delusions. But inspite of this awareness I keep on running behind the sense objects like a dog, a goat and a donkey."

A dog nibbles at a piece of dead bone and relishes the taste of blood that comes out of its own mouth by constant biting and tearing at the tissue of the bone, but it thinks in its ignorance that the blood is oozing from the bone itself and not from his own mouth.

Similarly, a goat who is about to be butchered goes on feeding and nibbling at leaves etc., unaware of the fact that it is about to be killed.

The donkey grazes constantly on green grass in a large meadow but still goes on getting thin because when it sees the large stretch of land full of green grass lying ahead it thinks that it has not eaten enough and its stomach is still empty. So in spite of over-feeding its self, the donkey remains hungry and famished.

@Kaam—The word ‘Kaam’ means sensual attractions of worldly charms and the overwhelming urge for sense gratification, collectively called ‘Kaam’. It literally refers to lust, yearnings, lasciviousness and passions; desire for sensual gratification and enjoyments of the material world and its juicy attractions.

It also refers to a creature’s various aspirations and desires which are said to be of three principal types. These three Kaams are said to be three types of desires and aspirations that a creature has. These three Kaams relate to the fulfillment of spiritual desires, worldly desires for obtaining the numerous material objects that give pleasure and comfort, and the desire to gratification of the sense organs.

\$Trishna—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71 which appears below says that there are three types of Trishnas—viz. that which pertains to one’s son or off-spring, that which pertains to one’s personal financial well-being, and that which pertains to the external world.

The concept of ‘Trishna’ has been described in the Atharva Veda’s *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 35, and in Canto 5, verse no. 14 as follows—

“Canto 1, verse no. 35 = A person who is peaceful, tranquil, serene and calm in his inner-self would treat the outside world in a similar manner.

This is like looking at the world through a glass window. The sights seen would assume the colour of the glass. If the glass is red tinted for instance, the world outside would also be red-hued. This fact has been beautifully brought out in Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 93/1-93/15, and in Naradparivrajak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 3.

Now therefore, if the inner-self is pure and untainted, if it is calm and peaceful, the Atma—which incidentally is the ‘observer’ living inside the dwelling known as the body of the creature—would see or observe the outside world as being calm and peaceful. On the contrary, if the inner-self is restless and agitated, the outer world too appears to be restless and agitated in equal proportion for the creature. In other words, a man sees the world like he himself is. Hence the importance is on attaining inner peace and quietude instead of seeking it outside because the ‘outside’ is a world that is constantly on the boil and ever simmering like the surface of the hot sand in a desert when mirage makes its appearance.

Similarly, a man whose inner-self is burning with ‘Trishna’ (greed, rapacity, yearnings and wants) would find the world too tormenting and agitating for his soul. He would find only miseries and sorrows in the world (because his greed and yearning never ends, the more he gets the more he wants, and like a man running behind the illusive water seen in a mirage in the hot desert such a man too does not find peace anywhere in the world, but is rather scorched by the various sorrows and miseries that accompany shortages, unfulfilled desires, lack of opportunities and so many other things or situations that lead to dismay and frustration that seem to engulf him from all sides, drowning him and suffocating him in their wake).

An internally contented man would be happy with whatever he has in this world and would thank the Lord for it, and an internally unsatisfied man may become the Emperor of the whole earth but would still want more of it, and remain dissatisfied

and greedy throughout his life. Internally he is being ‘burnt’ by numerous aspirations, yearnings, desires and wants, and externally this world ‘burns’ him in failed ambitions leading to a chain of frustrations, dismay, distrust, strife, jealousy, ill-will, enmity, animosity and their accompanying sorrows, miseries and pains. (35).

“Canto 5, verse no. 14 = Oh Anagh (one who is sinless; here referring to Nidagh)! Become silent and composed. Abandon all mental and intellectual restlessness and perplexities.

Discard all inclinations to think of anything; be neutral and immune to all thoughts (because any kind of thought would entangle you in a web of doubts and confusions as there are numerous doctrines and many aspects of the same Truth which would create more confusions in your mind than removing them, and two, thoughts would keep you on your toes and would not allow you to rest even for a while).

Leave aside all the Vrittis (natural inclinations and temperaments) that are the integral part of the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious). [Refer Canto 1, verse no. 42.]

Be of an exemplary calmness of mind and composed demeanours; cultivate a high degree of mental steadiness. This will pave the way for your Nirvana—or the final spiritual liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 86.] (114).”

*Krodha—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 277 where Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has told sage Parashuram, who was very angry because Lord Shiva’s bow had been broken as a precondition of Sita’s marriage, that ‘anger and fury’ is at the root of all sorts of sins and wrong-doings that torment a man and cause him endless problems.]

दो०. ग्यानी तापस सूर कबि कोबिद गुन आगार ।

केहि कै लोभ बिडंबना कीन्हि न एहिं संसार ॥ ७० (क) ॥

dōhā.

gyānī tāpasa sūra kabi kōbida guna āgāra.

kēhi kai lōbha biḍambanā kīnhi na ēhiṁ sansāra. 70 (a).

Whether a person is Gyani (a knowledgeable, well learned, enlightened and wise person), a Taapas (an ascetic or hermit who does severe Tapa, or performs stern penances and observes strict austerities), a Sura (a brave, courageous person who is of a resolute and steady mind; a hero), a Kabi (a learned person; an expert in any field, especially that pertains to the letters or scriptures), a Kobid (a seer and an expert), or someone who is deemed to be a treasury of all the good and auspicious virtues in this world (Guna Aagaar)—

--Say, who amongst them has been spared from the embarrassment and dilemma that ‘Lobha’ (greed, rapacity) creates in this world; who has not been betrayed by Lobha¹. (Doha no. 70 -a)

[Note—¹Lobha: Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 47.

In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 21 where Sugriv, the king of the monkey race, tells Lord Ram that if a

person is not snared by Lobha, then surely he is like the Lord himself. In other words, only the very holy and pious souls escape the trap of Lobha.

‘Lobha’ is such a vice that draws in its tentacles even the wisest of men. They all fall prey to its temptations. Greed and rapacity creates such a situation for them they sooner or later they are all embarrassed, and subject to ridicule and infamy. But inspite of knowing this fact, they still yearn for this or that material thing of the world.

For instance, a monk has renounced the world and taken the vows of austerity. Then he falls prey to temptations and begins to collect things of comfort around him. He wears ochre clothes and turns the beads of the prayer rosary, but his mind is preoccupied by the things of the world. He has to build a monastery, or a temple or such like things. Then he worries about its upkeep and organisation. Then he wants a bank account and money to fill this account. He now needs attendants, office and other paraphernalia needed to run the affairs of the web he has himself created around him. The vicious cycle continues. His greed for more and still more never ends. He wants his organisation to expand, to go to foreign lands and establish branches there.

A hermit builds a hermitage, then he collects disciples, then he wants more of them, then he wants his name and fame to spread, and so on. The hermit and the monk fall in the trap of ‘Lobha’ as well as ‘Trishna’.

Remember: Lobha, Trishna, Krodha, Moha, Maya, Kaam etc. go hand in hand; all of them are intertwined, and they affect and determine the character, well-being, attitude and outlook of an individual in a composite manner. One leads to another. Some are synonymous with each other, some have different meanings individually but are closely inter-linked with each other, some pave the way for other related vices, some are easy to overcome while others are stubborn to the hilt, and the vicious chain continues which is detrimental for the happiness and welfare of the individual person who allows even one such evil guest to enter his house.]

श्री मद बक्र न कीन्ह केहि प्रभुता बधिर न काहि ।
मृगलोचनि के नैन सर को अस लाग न जाहि ॥ ७० (ख) ॥

śrī mada bakra na kīnha kēhi prabhutā badhira na kāhi.
mṛgalōcani kē naina sara kō asa lāga na jāhi. 70 (b).

Who has not become haughty, arrogant, egoist, reckless and ill-mannered due to the false sense of pride of pelf, pride of self-importance and self-worth that comes with acquisition of ‘Sri’ (worldly material wealth and enhanced prosperity)?

Likewise, who has not been defeated by ‘Prabhuta’ or acquisition of power and authority¹?

Again, is there anyone who has not been smitten (hit and conquered) by the lustful glances that resemble sharp-edged shafts thrown at him by a lady with bewitching beauty and charming eyes like that of a fawn²? (Doha no. 70 -b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 60 where the same idea is expressed in relation to Daksha Prajapati who had become very haughty and arrogant when the creator Brahma had appointed him the guardian of his creation. It is said in these two verses that there is no one who does not become haughty and arrogant upon being elevated to a high place or on acquisition of power, authority and honour.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43 where Lord Ram tells sage Narad that a woman is a personified form of 'Maya'—that is, just like it is difficult to resist the temptations created by Maya, the lust of passions created by a sensual woman is also too difficult to resist.]

चौ०. गुन कृत सन्यपात नहिं केही । कोउ न मान मद तजेउ निबेही ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

guna kṛta san'yapāta nahim kēhī. kō'u na māna mada tajē'u nibēhī. 1.

Who is not thrown into a delirium by the combined effect of the three Gunas¹ upon his mind and behaviour just like a person suffering from high fever that is caused by disturbance of the equilibrium between three humours of the body (which usually prove fatal for the person who suffers from such diseases)²?

Who is not stung by the tormentors known as 'Maan' and 'Mada'³? [To wit, it is very difficult not to become proud, arrogant and haughty upon getting honour and fame, or on acquiring a high position in society and being praised for one's achievements and qualities.] (1)

[Note—¹The three Gunas referred here are the following—Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. The Sata Guna refers to the auspicious qualities in a man; the Tama Guna refers to the worst and the most despicable qualities; and the Raja Gunas refers to the qualities that fall somewhere in between.

According to the philosophy of the Upanishads, every living being has these three Gunas in varying proportions. They control and decide each living being's behaviour and thought processes that are driven by the combined effect of all these three Gunas working together. If the Sata Guna in a person is the dominant quality, his actions and thought processes would be noble and honourable in the same proportion as the intensity of this Guna in him, and will be opposite to that person in whom the Tama Guna is the dominant one.

²According to the ancient system of medicine called Aurveda, the human body functions properly and remains free from diseases when its three vital humours called 'Kafa', 'Pitta' and 'Vayu' (meaning mucous, bile and vital airs respectively) work harmoniously. If the balance gets disturbed, all sorts of ailments afflict the body.

This analogy is employed here to mean that when there is a perfect balance between the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama, the person acts and thinks sensibly, and his actions and deeds are righteous. A small mismatch of the Gunas creates delusions in him like the mismatched humours that would create the delirium of high fever in a sick person.

³'Maan' means getting praise and honour, and 'Mada' means its accompanying pride, arrogance and haughtiness. In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 60 this principle has been affirmed with respect to Daksha Prajapati who had become very arrogant and haughty once he was elevated to the post of the guardian of the world by the creator Brahma.]

जोबन ज्वर केहि नहिं बलकावा । ममता केहि कर जस न नसावा ॥ २ ॥

jōbana jvara kēhi nahim balakāvā. mamatā kēhi kara jasa na nasāvā. 2.

Who is not deluded, and becomes wild and reckless under the influence of the fever symbolising ‘Joban’ (youth), and whose fame and good reputation is not marred by ‘Mamta’ (infatuation and worldly attachments)? (2)

[Note—Refer to Doha no. 70 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 herein above.

In youth, a person becomes easily excited and is prone to being attracted to all the charms of the material world and the desires they generate in the mind. It is rare to find a youth who can control his natural urges and exercise self-control over his sense organs. It is rare for a youth to overcome all the negative qualities mentioned in these verses, be it anger, lust, passion, desire for gratification, attraction for the charms and material things of the world, desire for pelf, honour and fame, or getting sucked in the vortex of envy and jealousy.

Similar, the sense of attachment with the material world often leads to the downfall of great men who otherwise are held in high esteem by the world. They preach renunciation and about the falsehood of the world, but themselves are knee deep in possessiveness.]

मच्छर काहि कलंक न लावा । काहि न सोक समीर डोलावा ॥ ३ ॥

macchara kāhi kalaṅka na lāvā. kāhi na sōka samīra ḍōlāvā. 3.

Who has not been shamed by ‘Matsarya’ (jealousy and envy)*, and who has not been swayed by the stormy wind of ‘Shoka’ (grief and its associated mental agony, restlessness, anxiety and emotional stress)? (3)

[Note—*According to the Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are six enemies which are metaphors for the various faults that are associated with a creature. They are the following—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodha (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, ill-temper, fury), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, false pride, hypocrisy and ego) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will)

When a man is under the influence of ‘Shoka’ or grief, his mind does not work properly and he becomes very susceptible to committing wrong. He would often do wrong things just in an attempt to overcome his grief without realising that such actions only aggravate his problems.

Grief makes a person lose his mental poise and he becomes depressed and dejected. If it continues for a long time it adversely affects him; he loses his sense of judgement and the ability to adjust to changing circumstances. It affects his personal health and makes a life burden for him. In this state of mind, the person would go to any length to find a way out of his grief, and more often than not he does things that add to his grief instead of decreasing it.

Take the example of king Janak, the father of Sita. He was one of the most self-realised and wise kings of the time; he practiced exemplary self-control over his

emotions and was always calm and poised. But when he found that Sita's future was in doldrums and perhaps she would have to remain unmarried for life when none of the assembled princes and kings could lift and break the 'bow' to fulfil the condition for marrying her, Janak was overcome with utter distress and grief. He lost his wisdom and patience, became angry, and vented his ire at the kings and princes by insulting them and calling them impotent in public besides admonishing himself for being so foolish as to arrange for the bow-breaking ceremony. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252.]

चिंता साँपिनि को नहिं खाया । को जग जाहि न ब्यापी माया ॥ ४ ॥

cintā sāṃpini kō nahim khāyā. kō jaga jāhi na byāpī māyā. 4.

'Chintaa' (worry) is like a serpent, and who is not bitten (negatively affected) by it¹?

Say, who is that person in this world who is not affected and overcome by 'Maya' (delusions)? [To wit, everyone is affected by Maya to a small or great extent. No one is exempt from it; no one can claim that he is immune to the effects of Maya.] (4)

[Note—¹The bite of a snake is fatal; it's horrifying and tormenting. Rarely does a person escape death if bitten by a snake. This is used as a metaphor to emphasise the point that a person who harbours worries in his mind is virtually injected by a strong dose of poison that is bound to have a detrimental effect on his mind and health. His health decays and his mental abilities decline. In the long run his life is shortened and his productivity reduced. He becomes depressed, dejected and listless.

The debilitating effect of 'worries' (cintā) is also mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 12 that says that the worry of being killed by his inimical brother Baali had been tormenting Sugriv like a deadly festering wound in his heart.]

कीट मनोरथ दारु सरीरा । जेहि न लाग घुन को अस धीरा ॥ ५ ॥

kīṭa manōratha dāru sarīrā. jēhi na lāga ghuna kō asa dhīrā. 5.

Is there anyone so resolute of mind that his body is not consumed by 'Manorath' (desire, wish, yearning; longing for something; determination to do or acquire anything; worldly aspirations) just like wood that is made hollow by an insect (such as the white ant) that eats into its pith by boring into it? (5)

[Note—The last word 'Dhiraa' (dhīrā) in this verse also means to be courageous and brave in the face of odds and adversity. This obviously refers to the state of a person's mind and intellect. A person who does not allow his mind to become affected by adversities and misfortunes, whose mind is not agitated by even the greatest of provocations, whose intellect is strong enough to think coherently, wisely and analytically in spite of all the uncertainties and turbulence surrounding him in this world—such a man is said to be a 'Dhira', a brave person who courageously faces

adversities and misfortunes with fortitude, equanimity, calmness of mind and determination. He is 'brave and courageous' because he is able to maintain full control over his mind and responses of the body when faced with worries and failures to achieve desired results, when his aspirations are not fulfilled.

Desires and longings arise in the mind, and then the mind instructs the body to make efforts to fulfil them. The poor body has to obey the commands of the mind. If the mind is strong and understands what should be its priorities, then it would not push the body beyond its limits of endurance to go after things that are beyond its means. This helps both the mind and the body to have peace.

Realisable goals are okay, but again the wise man with a 'resolute mind' prepares himself for adverse results and does not worry unduly about them.

The word 'consumed' here implies that if a man is of a weak frame of mind, then his whole being, his entire life is spent in pursuing his desires and aspirations. He thinks of nothing else but ways and means to fulfil his wishes. If he is not able to fulfil them, his physical health suffers in the same way as when worry overtakes him.

Desires and worries go hand in hand. A man of a weak mind first harbours a desire, and since his mind is irresolute he does not know what to do or what course of action he must pursue so that his wishes are fulfilled. When given choice, he is uncertain which amongst them to select. And if his wishes are not fulfilled he starts blaming himself and all around him. His health is adversely affected; he would not eat and rest properly; his behaviour become restless and his faculties do not work in the same way as that of a man who is not too concerned about fulfilment of desires, and rather learns to take everything in his stride.

So we see that having 'worries' (verse no. 4) and having 'desires' (verse no. 5) are two factors that destroy a person's peace of mind; they are virtually the two sides of the same coin. They together negatively affect a person's overall health—both of his physical body as well as of his mind and intellect. He starts brooding and becomes forlorn, depressed, dejected and withdrawn.

But when would these two negative factors affect him? The answer is: When his mind is not strong and resolute enough to remain steady and overcome the numerous ups and downs of life by realising that everything can't happen as one wishes, that there is no benefit in worrying or lamenting as they will only harm the person instead of doing him any good.

Similarly, being too obsessed with success makes a man depressed at the slightest hint of failure, and again this happens when his mind is weak and does not realise that everything can't happen the way one wants them to happen.

The man who has a strong and steady mind would be able to deflect all sorts of emotional and sentimental storms that buffet him in the course of his life. He takes successes and failures in his stride. Instead of worrying about anything, he takes such steps that would help him to overcome the cause of the worry.

Likewise, if a man is contented with whatever he gets in life, believing in the Lord God and having trust in him that the Lord would take care of him and his necessities, when he believes that successes and failures are parts of the game known as 'life', then desires and hopes would not negatively affect him if they go unrequited.]

सुत बित लोक ईषना तीनी । केहि कै मति इन्ह कृत न मलीनी ॥ ६ ॥

suta bita lōka īṣanā tīnī. kēhi kai mati inha kṛta na malīnī. 6.

Whose mind and intellect are not overwhelmed and polluted by the threefold desires related to (i) a son (progeny), (ii) wealth and material prosperity, and (iii) worldly fame and name? [To wit, it is rare to find a single person whose mind is not obsessed by these three things—progeny, wealth and fame.] (6)

[Note—This verse is directly related to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 70 which talks about ‘Trishna’. Here three types of desires are specifically mentioned—desires related to a son (such as the desire to see one’s son being successful in studies, business, professional life etc., or see him being praised by the world, or having a son with an excellent personality, and so on), to wealth and material prosperity, and to acquisition of name and fame.

These three longings are overwhelming for a man. It is almost impossible to resist them. Naturally, any desire of any kind will surely rob a man of his peace of mind as has been stressed in all the foregoing verses.

The idea is that all these factors are different manifestations of ‘Maya’: all of them are ‘family of Maya’ and closely related to it. It is Maya—the ‘whirlpool of delusions’ pertaining to this gross material and perishable world—that is at the root of all these factors.

What is meant by this? Well, a wise and enlightened man realises that the true identity of a person is his ‘Atma’, his ‘pure conscious soul that resides in the body’, and that this soul is on its journey through the world because of certain circumstances or developments in the past when this Atma had allowed its self to be surrounded by certain veil of misfortunes that weighed down upon it heavily and forced it to assume the current body. Each single individual with whom he comes in contact in this world is similarly weighed down by his own set of circumstances of the past; each individual’s Atma or his ‘true self’ is on his own independent journey. Their meeting and interaction is merely coincidental like countless passengers travelling to a same destination in a train. They forge friendship, share stories and food and addresses, and then forget everything once they reach their designated destinations.

A man with a steady and wise mind would therefore not be swayed by any kind of inputs from the world. He knows that his progeny is just another soul who is destined to have some sort of temporary contact with him, and that the son or the daughter has his or her own destiny and journey of life.

Similarly, a wise and erudite man realises that this material world and its sense objects are there only till that time his physical body lives in this world, and that one or the other day when his body ages and he dies everything would be left behind. So there is no use in crying over them unduly.

What is name and fame in a world that is driven by selfishness, and is of a short memory? People throng around those with whom they hope to satisfy some of their own interests, and no one would bother to pay a dime for an enlightened man who would try to wean them away from delusions and show them the correct path. People call such men as misleading the world.]

यह सब माया कर परिवारा । प्रबल अमिति को बरनै पारा ॥ ७ ॥

yaha saba māyā kara parivārā. prabala amiti kō baranai pārā. 7.

All the negative qualities mentioned herein above are deemed to be the ‘Family of Maya’¹.

They are very powerful and strong; they form an extended family with countless members, each with its own polluting effects and corrupting abilities, and working together to serve their principal, the Maya².

It is not possible for anyone to count them or describe how they work in tandem to delude the creature. (7)

[Note—¹The entities that are different variations of Maya—i.e. factors that incite worldly delusions in a man—as named in these verses, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71, are the following:--

Moha (attachment, infatuation), Kaam (lust, passion), Trishna (desires, yearning), Krodha (anger; fury; wrath), Lobha (greed), Sri Mada (pride of self; pride of honour and achievements, of worldly prosperity and wealth), Gunas (the three inherent qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas that every living being possesses, and which mould his character and personality), Maana-Mada (arrogance and haughtiness that comes with honour, success and respect), Joban Jwar (the recklessness and arrogance of youth), Mamta (affection and attachment to worldly things), Matsarya (envy, jealousy), Shoka (grief), Chinta (worry), Maya (delusions), Manorath (hopes, aspirations, vows, desires, determination to do this and achieve that), and the trio consisting of son/progeny-wealth/prosperity-fame/good name.

They are all close associates of Maya, their ‘boss’. They foster Maya and work in tandem with it. They are like an extended family of Maya; they all help each other, and have the same gene in them—the characteristic quality of ‘delusion’ that is the common factor with all of them. All of them produce delusion of some kind, and all of them therefore rob the creature of his peace and happiness, as well as affect negatively the stability of mind and reasoning ability of the intellect.

²Besides the specific negative qualities named in the foregoing verses, there are many more others that are natural off-shoots of the primary ones just like a huge banyan tree having a main trunk—which here is the ‘Maya’, from which the main branches of the tree spread out in all the directions—which are represented by the negative qualities named in these verses, and then there are so many countless other smaller sub-branches and shoots that give the shape of a thick canopy around the tree, making it look huge and cover an extensive area around the main trunk. These countless smaller shoots and sub-branches of the main tree are like the many negative qualities that are subsidiaries or ancillaries of the main negative qualities mentioned in this discussion.

These are discussed later on in this Chapter called Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 118. Briefly these other off shoots of Maya are (i) the darkness caused by Moha (worldly attachments, attractions and infatuations), and its companion known as Avidya (ignorance). We shall read them in due course. It is said there that misconception about the reality that causes a lot of delusions, confusions and doubts (“Vram” and “Bheda”, which are synonyms of Maya), and worldly attractions (known as Moha) are all like the ‘family of Avidya’—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 118.

The way and the mean to overcome the negative affects of Maya are (i) Bhakti (having devotion for Lord God—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precedes Doha no. 116), (ii) Shradha (firm faith and belief in the Lord as well as on the immaculacy and purity of the Atma which is the true self of the Jiva and is consciousness personified—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 117), and (iii) other auspicious and eclectic virtues such as Yam and Niyam, practicing Tapa, Japa, Vrat, Dharma, Dama, Satya and Vairagya etc., acquiring wisdom and knowledge, and being enlightened and self-realised—all of which are enumerated from Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 117—to Doha no. 119.]

सिव चतुरानन जाहि डेराहीं । अपर जीव केहि लेखे माहीं ॥ ८ ॥

siva caturānana jāhi ḍērāhīm. apara jīva kēhi lēkhē māhīm. 8.

When even the two powerful Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma (who is also known as ‘Chaturanan’ because he has four heads, enabling him to see in all the four directions of his creation simultaneously) are afraid of ‘Maya’ and its powerful negative influences¹, then say what do ordinary creatures of this world count?

[To wit, when Shiva and Brahma, who are two senior gods of this creation, fear to annoy Maya and are afraid that they would be affected by its negative and corrupting influences, then other creatures, including the other junior gods, have no chance of opposing the onslaught of Maya.]¹ (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60 where Brahma acknowledges that Maya has not spared him; and Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 62 where Lord Shiva affirms that there is no one so wise and enlightened that he would escape being deluded under the influence of Maya.

In spite of this fact that Maya is so powerful that it can instill fear in the mind of such powerful gods as Shiva and Brahma who themselves are wise and fully able to look after themselves, it (Maya) is like a timid maid in front of the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram, who in turn is a human manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being known also as the Viraat Purush. Therefore, Maya cannot play tricks with its Lord, the Supreme Being. Rather, Maya has to dance to the tune set by Lord Ram. This is endorsed in Doha no. 71 (b) that follows below.

Further, ‘Maya’ (worldly delusions) is regarded as a dancer who is very cunning. She is herself afraid of ‘Bhakti’ (the auspicious virtue of devotion for Lord God) that is personified as another maid of the Lord, but his favourite. This being the case, the dancer maid (Maya) is afraid to offend the maid who is the Lord’s favourite (i.e. Bhakti). This simply means that a person who has Bhakti in him is free from the negative affects of Maya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 116.

Later on in this story we read that sage Kaagbhusund has himself asserted that ever since Lord Ram had blessed him and accepted him as one of his devotees, Maya had stopped tormenting him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 89.]

दो०. व्यापि रहेउ संसार महुँ माया कटक प्रचंड ।
सेनापति कामादि भट दंभ कपट पाषंड ॥ ७१ (क) ॥

dōhā.

byāpi rahē'u sansāra mahum' māyā kaṭaka pracaṇḍa.
sēnāpati kāmādi bhaṭa dambha kapaṭa pāṣaṇḍa. 71 (a).

{In this Doha, the symbolism of an army is used to emphasise how strong and powerful Maya is, and what are the different units of this symbolic army.}

The huge, invincible and fierce army of 'Maya' is spread all over the world (i.e. Maya is all-pervading and very powerful, conquering the entire world and marking its presence everywhere).

'Kaam' and others are the chief Generals of this army. [The other Generals of this symbolic army of Maya, besides Kaam, are—Krodha and Lobha.]

The warriors of this army are 'Dambha' (hypocrisy), 'Kapat' (deceit, conceit, fraud), and 'Pakhand' (pretence; falsehood)¹. (Doha no. 71-a)

[Note—¹In verse no. 7 that precedes this Doha we have read about the 'family' of Maya. Besides the entities listed in the foregoing verses, these three mentioned here are the other members of Maya's extended family.

Maya is like an emperor or king having a huge army consisting of all the negative and corrupting factors enumerated in these verses. Just like the army obeys the command of its emperor or king and serves the interest of its lord, the emperor or the king, all the entities mentioned in this discussion serve Maya and aid in its efforts to keep the world under its delusory spell.

Saying that Maya's army is present everywhere means that no one in this world is free from the domineering presence and fear of Maya.]

सो दासी रघुबीर कै समुझें मिथ्या सोपि ।
छूट न राम कृपा बिनु नाथ कहउँ पद रोपि ॥ ७१ (ख) ॥

sō dāsī raghubīra kai samujhēm mithyā sōpi.
chūṭa na rāma kṛpā binu nātha kaha'um' pada rōpi. 71 (b).

But that Maya is nothing but a maid of Lord Raghubir (Ram, the brave prince of the Raghu's line of kings of Ayodhya)¹.

Though it seems to be far-fetched and false, but the truth of the matter is that the grip of Maya cannot be broken without the grace and mercy of Lord Ram. I (sage Kaagbhusund) can say this affirmatively and with utmost confidence². (Doha no. 71-b)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was an incarnation of the Supreme Being. Maya is likened to a maid of the Lord and a dancer. The other maid that serves the Lord is Bhakti (devotion). Lord Ram is favourable towards the maid known as Bhakti because of her good virtues and character as opposed to the other maid named Maya who is cunning

and full of deceit and pretence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 116.

²Maya is afraid of no one else but the Lord. Anyone upon whom Lord Ram shows his grace is free from the corrupting influences of Maya. This is stressed by Kaagbhusund elsewhere also, such as Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 89.]

चौ०. जो माया सब जगहि नचावा । जासु चरित लखि काहुँ न पावा ॥ १ ॥

सोइ प्रभु भू बिलास खगराजा । नाच नटी इव सहित समाजा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jō māyā saba jagahi nacāvā. jāsu carita lakhi kāhum' na pāvā. 1.

sō'i prabhu bhrū bilāsa khagarājā. nāca naṭī iva sahita samājā. 2.

That maverick Maya which makes the whole world dance to its tunes, and is so mysterious that no one is able to know its true character and nature (and therefore, by extension, how it will influence the creature and what negative consequences would follow in its wake also remains a mystery), --- (1)

Oh King of Birds (Garud), that same Maya dances like a puppet, along with her entire troupe of attendants, to the subtle signals given by the movement of Lord Ram's eyebrows. (2)

[Note—The same idea that Maya is like a dancer is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 116. In this context it is also said here that Maya is afraid of Bhakti, another maid of Lord Ram, because the Lord is favourable to Bhakti.

Maya is so domineering in this creation that even Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma are afraid of its tricks (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 herein above). But Maya herself is afraid of Lord Ram because he is the Supreme Lord of creation.

'Dancing according to the signals given by the movement of Lord Ram's eyebrows' is a figure of speech meaning that Maya does the Lord's bidding, it completely obeys the Lord and never dares to play its dirty tricks upon the Lord just like a court dancer who never dares to play fools with the emperor or the king.

The court dancer is very alert and cautious to synchronise all her dance moves and gestures which are liked by the king. She is careful not to do or say anything that is not like by her master and lord, the king; she is not concerned if the other courtiers are please with her or not as long as she manages to please the king. If any of her moves and songs are not liked by the king, he may not explicitly express his displeasure in an open court but hints to the courtesan with a movement of his eyebrows, such as raising them, or arching them and frowning at her. She immediately picks up the cue and changes her stance instantly.

Similarly, Maya keeps a close watch whether or not her actions and deeds are liked by Lord Ram. If she finds that she has annoyed the Lord by casting her evil spell on someone favoured by the Lord such as his devotee, and this has not been liked by

the Lord when he indicates his disapproval by arching his eyebrows, Maya immediately stops her tricks and lets that person rest in peace.

It means that Maya is very obedient to Lord Ram, and therefore it does not touch the Lord's devotees. One such example is sage Kaagbhusund himself as he is not at all affected by the negative influences of Maya by the grace of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 89. Maya has no guts to oppose anyone upon whom Lord Ram is favourable. This is the central idea of this Doha.]

सोइ सच्चिदानंद घन रामा । अज बिग्यान रूप बल धामा ॥ ३ ॥

व्यापक व्याप्य अखंड अनंता । अखिल अमोघसक्ति भगवंता ॥ ४ ॥

sō'i saccidānanda ghana rāmā. aja bigyāna rūpa bala dhāmā. 3.
byāpaka byāpya akhaṇḍa anantā. akhila amōghasakti bhagavantā. 4.

Lord Ram (whom you saw being ensnared by the magical rope of snakes in the battle-field of Lanka) is the same Supreme Being who is an embodiment of bliss that is characteristic of pure Consciousness (saccidānanda ghana).

Indeed, the Lord is without a birth (aja), is a personified form of all truthful knowledge and wisdom (bigyāna rūpa), is a treasury of strength and power (bala dhāmā), --- (3)

--- is all-pervading and omnipresent in the universe (byāpaka byāpya), is immutable and indivisible (akhaṇḍa), is eternal and without a beginning or end (anantā), is complete in himself and incorporates the entire creation in his own self (akhila), and is the Lord God of the creation who is invincible, who possesses all might, power and authority (amōghasakti bhagavantā). (4)

अगुन अदभ्र गिरा गोतीता । सबदरसी अनवद्य अजीता ॥ ५ ॥

निर्मम निराकार निरमोहा । नित्य निरंजन सुख संदोहा ॥ ६ ॥

aguna adabhra girā gōtītā. sabadarasī anavadya ajītā. 5.
nirmama nirākāra niramōhā. nitya niraṇjana sukha sandōhā. 6.

He (Lord Ram) is attributeless (aguna), is all-encompassing and extends even beyond everything that exists (adabhra), is beyond the reach and purview of speech and words (girā gōtītā), is all-seeing, all-knowing and omniscient (sabadarasī), is beyond understanding and reach of the senses (anavadya), is invincible (ajītā) --- (5)

--- is pure, incorruptible and free from blemishes (nirmama), is formless (nirākāra), is free from the tainting effects of delusions, ignorance, attachments and infatuations of all kinds (niramōhā), is immutable, steady and unchanging at all times and eras (nitya), is faultless, flawless, uncorrupted, untainted and without any blemishes of any kind (niraṇjana), and is bliss and beatitude personified (sukha sandōhā). (6)

प्रकृति पार प्रभु सब उर बासी । ब्रह्म निरीह बिरज अबिनासी ॥ ७ ॥
 इहाँ मोह कर कारन नाहीं । रबि सन्मुख तम कबहुँ कि जाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

prakṛti pāra prabhu saba ura bāsī. brahma nirīha biraja abināsī. 7.
 ihām̐ mōha kara kārana nāhīm̐. rabi sanmukha tama kabahum̐ ki jāhīm̐. 8.

The Lord transcends Prakriti (Nature; Matter) (prakṛti pāra prabhu). The Lord resides in the subtle heart of all living beings in the form of pure consciousness that is known as their Atma, which is their ‘true self’ (prabhu saba ura bāsī).

Indeed and in all sooth and without any gainsay, the Lord is none else but Brahm, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness in a personified form (brahma). This being the case, the Lord (Sri Ram) is free from all passions and desires to do this and that (nirīha).

This is the grand reputation and the exalted stature of the Lord who is imperishable and eternal (biraja abināsī)¹. (7)

Be warned and be careful to understand that there is no scope of delusions and confusions to find any ground to stand upon with respect to Lord Ram and his divinity and holiness. Say, can darkness ever approach the sun?

[To wit, just as darkness and sun cannot exist together, Lord Ram and all sorts of negativities and spiritual darkness associated with ignorance about the Reality and neglect of the Truth can’t stay together.]² (8)

[Note—¹All the unique qualities and excellent virtues of Lord Ram that are listed in Chaupais herein above are also cited elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. Some of the instances are found in Baal Kand—such as (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Doha no. 198; (iv) Doha no. 199; (v) Doha no. 295.

Lord Ram is Brahm personified, yet he acted like an ordinary human being to show what fate the ‘pure consciousness’, that possesses all these grand virtues listed herein above, faces if it begins to identify itself with the gross body of a creature. To wit, if the Supreme Being would act in the way he did, one can well imagine the fate of ordinary living beings. But the upside of this is that Lord Ram showed to the world by his own life’s example that it is indeed possible for a person to lead an exemplarily right and auspicious life in accordance to the principles of Dharma (laws of proper and right conduct, thought and action) inspite of facing the greatest of adversities, uncertainties, dilemmas and temptations in one’s life in this world.

At the same time the Lord also showed that inspite of taking all precautions a person is apt to make mistakes of omission and commission, but he should not be overly perturbed by it because this is a part and parcel of life in this gross mundane world, and one should take all things, both favourable and unfavourable, in one’s stride and move on.

But then, what would distinguish a good man from a bad one? It’s the quantum of goodness and good virtues in him, it’s the quality of deeds done by him and the virtuousness of life that he leads which would distinguish the two types of persons in a given set of situations.

²Kaagbhusund has politely chided Garud here for the doubts that he had harboured about the divine reality of Lord Ram by using this analogy of the darkness not being able to live in the presence of the sun. Lord Ram is like the 'sun' here, and the doubts and confusions that Garud had are like the various shades of 'darkness'. Both are incompatible with each other.

Therefore, now that Garud has heard the sacred story pertaining to the divinity of Lord Ram, it is expected that the darkness of ignorance present inside him would automatically vanish.]

दो०. भगत हेतु भगवान प्रभु राम धरेउ तनु भूप ।

किए चरित पावन परम प्राकृत नर अनुरूप ॥ ७२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

bhagata hētu bhagavāna prabhu rāma dharē'u tanu bhūpa.
ki'ē carita pāvana parama prākṛta nara anurūpa. 72 (a).

[Kaagbhusund explained that—] Lord Ram had assumed the form of a King (of Ayodhya) for the benefit of his devotees¹, and then performed so many deeds and took so many actions that were sacred and holy like an ordinary human being to act as a source of guidance and inspiration for them. He behaved like an ordinary human, though he was beyond the reach of Nature. (Doha no. 72-a)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 187; (ii) Doha no. 192; (iii) Doha no. 198; (iv) Doha no. 199 ; (v) Doha no. 205; and (b) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 26 which is explicit on this point.

In this context, see the note that has been appended to Chaupai line no. 7-8 herein above.]

जथा अनेक बेष धरि नृत्य करइ नट कोइ ।

सोइ सोइ भाव देखावइ आपुन होइ न सोइ ॥ ७२ (ख) ॥

jathā anēka bēṣa dhari nṛtya kara'i naṭa kō'i.
sō'i sō'i bhāva dēkhāva'i āpuna hō'i na sō'i. 72 (b).

It is just like the case of an expert actor who does various deeds, assumes different guises and the personality of different characters, and exhibits a myriad of emotions and sentiments while he is performing on stage so much so that it becomes difficult to realise who he actually is, but himself he remains the same person.

[To wit, though an expert actor appears to be an absolutely different person while he is acting on stage and assumes different roles assigned to him, but off-stage he is the same old person known to his friends and compatriots. Similarly, Brahm, the Supreme Being, acted like an ordinary human being when he was in the role of a King of Ayodhya called 'Lord Sri Ram', but Lord Ram's primary form always remained that of Brahm who is the Supreme Being of this creation.]¹ (Doha no. 72-b)

[Note—¹The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 205.]

चौ०. असि रघुपति लीला उरगारी । दनुज बिमोहनि जन सुखकारी ॥ १ ॥
 जे मति मलिन बिषयबस कामी । प्रभु पर मोह धरहिं इमि स्वामी ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

asi raghupati līlā uragārī. danuja bimōhani jana sukhakārī. 1.
 jē mati malina biṣayabasa kāmī. prabhu para mōha dharahim imi svāmī. 2.

[Kaagbhusund continued—] Oh the ‘enemy of serpents’ (“uragārī”—a reference to Garud)¹! Such is the mystical story and the maverick deeds done by Lord Ram, the Lord of the lineage of Kings descending from Raghu (raghupati), that they delude the demons (into believing that he was an ordinary human prince) while it gives immense pleasure and delight to the devotees (as they bask in the Lord’s glories and exult in his remembrance)². (1)

Oh Lord (“svāmī”—i.e. Garud)! Only those whose mind and heart are dark, pervert and impure (mati malina), those who are tempted by the pleasure of the senses and are attached to the sense objects of the world (biṣayabasa), and those who are rendered slaves of passion, lust and longing (kāmī)—they are the ones who cast doubts on the divinity of Lord Ram and have delusions about his holiness. (2)

[Note—¹Garud can gobble up snakes, and therefore he is called an ‘enemy of serpents’. It was he who had freed Lord Ram from the snare of serpents in the battle-field of Lanka by devouring all of them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 73, and Doha no. 74-a.

²Lord Shiva has also expressed a similar view to his consort Parvati in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113.]

नयन दोष जा कहँ जब होई । पीत बरन ससि कहँ कह सोई ॥ ३ ॥
 जब जेहि दिसि भ्रम होइ खगेसा । सो कह पच्छिम उयउ दिनेसा ॥ ४ ॥

nayana dōṣa jā kaham̐ jaba hōī. pīta barana sasi kahum̐ kaha sōī. 3.
 jaba jēhi disi bhrama hō'i khagēsā. sō kaha pacchima uya'u dinēsā. 4.

[Citing some day-to-day examples, Kaagbhusund clarifies how this is made possible.] When someone suffers from distortion of eyesight or suffers from some serious disease of the eye (such as presence of thick layer of yellow mucous in it, or cataract formation at some stage), he would say that the disc of the moon is tinged yellow! (3)

Similarly, if someone is bewildered and does not know how to read the compass, he would say that the sun has risen in the west!¹ (4)

[Note—¹Everyone knows that both these observations are absurd and imply that the person who says them is out of his senses. But from the perspective of the person who makes these ridiculous statements, they are the facts as he sees them.

Similarly, from the viewpoint of the person who has a pervert and dark mind, who finds charm in the gross material world and remains submerged in it, thinking it to be the end of all existence, who does not realise that there is something higher and more sublime than life in this mortal world, who fails to see the subtle and universal Truth that lies beyond the visible world perceived by his senses—only such deluded persons would treat Lord Ram as a human being like themselves. They look at everything from the pinhole of their limited understanding of life and its truth; they fail to realise that there is something beyond their perception, something that is called ‘transcendental consciousness’ that is out of their reach.

Such persons regard the gross physical body of an individual as his or her identity. They do not know that the ‘real identity’ of an individual is his or her ‘soul’ which is ‘pure consciousness’ is a cosmic and universal entity that is transcendental, sublime, immaculate and eternal by its inherent nature. Lord Ram represents this ‘Universal Cosmic Consciousness’.

Even as it is difficult, if not impossible, to convince the man with a defective eyesight who sees the moon as being of an yellow colour, or the man who cannot read the compass and says that the sun has risen in the west, that what they see and say are absolutely wrong, it is also difficult, if not impossible, to convince a deluded man who has an evil mind that Lord Ram is not a human being but the Supreme Being himself in his form. He would make all sorts of arguments and throw tantrums if contradicted.]

नौकारूढ़ चलत जग देखा । अचल मोह बस आपुहि लेखा ॥ ५ ॥

बालक भ्रमहिं न भ्रमहिं गृहादी । कहहिं परस्पर मिथ्याबादी ॥ ६ ॥

naukārūrha calata jaga dēkhā. acala mōha basa āpuhi lēkhā. 5.

bālaka bhramahim na bhramahim grhādī. kahahim paraspara mithyābādī. 6.

[Citing another practical example, Kaagbhusund says—] When a man is riding a boat he erroneously believes that he is standing still in the water but the world surrounding him is on the move. (5)

Similarly, when children are playing, some of them start whirling around in circles and see the things in the house around them turning in the opposite direction. When other members of the household or other children who are standing there to watch tell them that nothing is moving and it is they who are turning in a circle, those children who are whirling just wouldn’t believe and they start arguing with others who tell them the fact, and by-and-by each group starts calling the other a liar.

[To wit, this also happens between those who are believers and devotees of the Lord, and those who are non-believers and non-devotees. Neither of the two would be able to convince the other of the reality; each group thinks that what it says is the correct thing.] (6)

हरि बिषइक अस मोह बिहंगा । सपनेहुँ नहिं अग्यान प्रसंगा ॥ ७ ॥

hari biṣa'ika asa mōha bihaṅgā. Sapanēhum' nahiṁ agyāna prasaṅgā. 7.

Oh the King of Birds (bihaṅgā)! In the same way, it is erroneous to think that Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram in this case, as he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu whose other name is 'Hari') has got deluded, bewildered or confused.

[To wit, when one is deluded, bewildered and confused about the truth and reality himself, he sees Lord Ram from a purely human perspective and comes to wrong conclusions about the authenticity, the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram.]

Otherwise, there is no question of Lord Ram being deluded, bewildered or confused even in a dream. (7)

मायाबस मतिमंद अभागी । हृदयँ जमनिका बहुबिधि लागी ॥ ८ ॥
ते सठ हठ बस संसय करहीं । निज अग्यान राम पर धरहीं ॥ ९ ॥

māyābasa matimanda abhāgī. Hrdayam' jamanikā bahubidhi lāgī. 8.
tē saṭha haṭha basa sansaya karahīm. nija agyāna rāma para dharahīm. 9.

Those who are unfortunate enough to be under the spell of Maya (delusions), those whose mind is corrupt and darkened by evil thoughts, and those whose heart has a curtain of worldly taints hanging over it, thereby veiling the truth from them, --- (8)

--- Such people are indeed the stupid and unlucky ones who harbour stubborn, irrational and unwarranted doubts in their mind and heart about the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram. Being thus misled by the distorted or corrupted perception of the truth and reality of the Lord, they are inclined to impose their own ignorance and delusions upon Lord Ram (treating him to be an ordinary human prince instead of being aware of the fact that he is a manifestation of the Supreme Being in a human form). (9)

दो०. काम क्रोध मद लोभ रत गृहासक्त दुखरूप ।
ते किमि जानहिं रघुपतिहि मूढ़ परे तम कूप ॥ ७३ (क) ॥
dōhā.

kāma krōdha mada lōbha rata grhāsakta dukharūpa.
tē kimi jānahīm raghupatihi mūṛha parē tama kūpa. 73 (a).

Verily indeed, those who are engrossed in having lust and passion, in anger and wrathfulness, in arrogance and haughtiness, in greed and avarice, and in the various affairs of the household, all of which represent different forms of miseries, sorrows and grief—say, how can such utterly unfortunate and mentally incompetent persons understand the sublime nature and the truth of Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram)?

Such stupid and unfortunate persons have fallen in a dark well of ignorance and delusions.

[To wit, just like the case of a person who has fallen in a dark well and thereby suffers from interminable misery, sorrow and grief throughout his life, such persons who cast aspersions on Lord Ram never find peace and happiness in their lives; they

are always miserable and torn between doubts and perplexities. They have no where to go to find spiritual peace and happiness for their tormented soul.] (Doha no. 73-a)

निर्गुन रूप सुलभ अति सगुन जान नहिं कोइ ।

सुगम अगम नाना चरित सुनि मुनि मन भ्रम होइ ॥ ७३ (ख) ॥

nirguna rūpa sulabha ati saguna jāna nahim kō'i.

sugama agama nānā carita suni muni mana bhrama hō'i. 73 (b).

The Lord's form that is attributeless and invisible to the physical eye may be quite easy to understand or realise (by those who have deeply studied and understood the principles of the scriptures to attain self-realisation and enlightenment, to know what the 'self' is, what is the entity called the Atma, and what is meant by the term 'true self' and 'pure cosmic consciousness').

But no one is able to properly understand the reality and the truth of the Lord's form that is visible and has attributes. [This is because this form of the Lord has so many similarities with other individuals that a person finds it difficult to come to terms to the fact that Lord Ram is the Supreme Being himself, and is not one like other human beings, albeit being more noble, wise, virtuous and superior as compared to others.]

Hence, even the wisest amongst the sages and seers get confused about the reality when they hear of the countless and varied deeds done by the Lord and actions taken by him in his form as a human being. This is because often times the Lord's visible behaviour and the deeds done by him do not seem to conform to his actual form of being the Supreme Lord of the world, and at other times his actions and behaviour are such that transcend comprehension, and which no human being can emulate¹. (Doha no. 73-b)

[Note—¹A few simple examples would clarify this point. Lord Ram had wailed and searched for his wife Sita like an ordinary man would whose dear wife has been abducted by some wicked person. One wonders that if he was indeed the Supreme Being who is supposed to be all-knowing and above such emotions, why then Lord Ram behave in this way like an ordinary man?

On the other hand, during the marriage ceremony held for Sita at Janakpur, the Lord had easily lifted and broken the 'bow of Lord Shiva' that none of the greatest kings and princes of the time could as much as move an inch from the ground. Then, countless blood-thirsty and ferocious demons who had spread terror even in the hearts of all-powerful Gods, were killed easily by the Lord single-handedly. If any human being could achieve this feat, why then were the demons not eliminated earlier. Why the great sages and hermits who were being tormented by these demons could not use their own mystical powers or seek the help of mighty kings and princes of the earth to eliminate this scourge; why had they sought the intervention of Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram to achieve this objective?

Surely then, there is more than what meets the eye! It's not easy to understand Lord Ram.]

चौ०. सुनु खगेस रघुपति प्रभुताई । कहउँ जथामति कथा सुहाई ॥ १ ॥

जेहि बिधि मोह भयउ प्रभु मोही । सोउ सब कथा सुनावउँ तोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu khagēsa raghupati prabhutāī. kaha'um̐ jathāmati kathā suhāī. 1.
jēhi bidhi mōha bhaya'u prabhu mōhī. sō'u saba kathā sunāva'um̐ tōhī. 2.

[Kaagbhusund said—] ‘Oh the King of Birds (Garud—“khagēsa”)! Please listen to me. Now I shall tell you about the greatness, the majesty, the glory and divinity of Lord Ram (prabhutāī) who was the Lord of the lineage of King descending from Raghu of Ayodhya (raghupati). This narration is extremely pleasant and exhilarating to hear, and I shall narrate this delightful story to you according to my best of abilities and knowledge. (1)

Oh Lord (prabhu)! I shall also tell you the whole story of how I myself fell prey to delusions and got overwhelmed by confusions and doubts¹. (2)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund wished to tell Garud that the latter should not feel sorry and regret for being deluded and getting confused, for he (Kaagbhusund) had also fallen prey to the powerful forces of Maya. No one should be proud and have ego in him that he is so much favoured by the Lord God that he would become immune to the forces of Nature or is superior to other fellow creatures just by the virtue of his closeness to the Lord, either by serving him directly as was the case with Garud, or by being the Lord’s faithful devotee as Kaagbhusund was. Refer Chaupai line no. 5 herein below where this thing is reiterated.

The simple fact is that the Lord loves all his creatures in equal measure, though of course he has a soft corner for his devotees, followers and subordinates who serve him selflessly, for whom the only source of happiness, joy, solace and succour in life is the Lord and no one else. This is specifically endorsed by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Another reason why Kaagbhusund chose to tell his own story about the way he was overcome by delusions and how by the grace of Lord Ram he got rid of it was to make discourse and narrative more convincing for Garud—because it meant that the speaker was telling something he had witnessed himself and his advice is based on his personal experience rather than on some theoretical or hypothetical theory that he has read in some ancient scripture. It means that his advice has a practical value, and is not just empty discourse.]

राम कृपा भाजन तुम्ह ताता । हरि गुन प्रीति मोहि सुखदाता ॥ ३ ॥

ताते नहिं कछु तुम्हहिं दुरावउँ । परम रहस्य मनोहर गावउँ ॥ ४ ॥

rāma kṛpā bhājana tumha tātā. hari guna prīti mōhi sukhadātā. 3.
tātē nahim̐ kachu tumhahim̐ durāva'um̐. parama rahasya manōhara gāva'um̐.
4.

Oh Dear (tātā)! You are favoured by Lord Ram; he has been graceful upon you. You have endearment for Lord Hari (Sri Ram) and honour the Lord’s excellent virtues.

This has made you sincerely interested in hearing the sacred story of the Lord, and this quality in you has pleased me very much. (3)

This is the reason why I shall conceal nothing from you, and sing (describe or narrate) for your benefit and good even the most esoteric of secrets pertaining to the Lord¹. (4)

[Note—¹The story of Lord Ram, known as ‘Ram Charit’, should be described in all its finer nuances and intricate details only to those who are eligible to listen to it, who would understand the events in the correct light and not twist facts and distort the story out of context to suit their own prejudiced interpretation. It is just like the principle that the secrets of nuclear science should not be taught to all, because if it lands in wrong hands and rogue elements in the society, it would be a disaster for all of human kind.

If the listener has a corrupted mind and pervert intent, he would mock at the story and ridicule the Lord himself. More harm would seep into the moral, emotional and ethical fabric of the society and cause excessive damage spiritually if the story of Lord Ram, which is otherwise holy, divine and spiritually uplifting, is told to those who are ineligible to hear it than to keep it untold.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it where Lord Shiva has told his consort Parvati that he has told her the story as she was sincere to hear it and had faith in him (Shiva) that he would tell her the truth. Lord Shiva has also outlined the qualities of a person who is eligible to hear this divine story, and the character of those who are not.]

सुनहु राम कर सहज सुभाऊ । जन अभिमान न राखहिं काऊ ॥ ५ ॥
संसृत मूल सूलप्रद नाना । सकल सोक दायक अभिमाना ॥ ६ ॥

sunahu rāma kara sahaja subhā'ū. jana abhimāna na rākhahim kā'ū. 5.
sansṛta mūla sūlaprada nānā. sakala sōka dāyaka abhimānā. 6.

Listen to the innate habit and natural disposition of Lord Ram: he never tolerates the negative trait of ‘Abhimaan’ (pride, ego and haughtiness) in his followers and subordinates (i.e. his devotees). (5)

The reason is that ‘Abhiman’ is at the root of one getting entangled in the gross mortal world of transmigration, and this negative traits causes immense and interminable suffering, grief, misery and pain to a creature. (6)

ताते करहिं कृपानिधि दूरी । सेवक पर ममता अति भूरी ॥ ७ ॥
जिमि सिसु तन ब्रन होइ गोसाई । मातु चिराव कठिन की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

tātē karahim kṛpānidhi dūri. sēvaka para mamatā ati bhūrī. 7.
jimi sisu tana brana hō'i gōsā'īm. mātu cirāva kaṭhina kī nā'īm. 8.

This is the reason the most merciful Lord removes this negative trait from his devotees and followers (“*sēvaka*”) immediately as the Lord has exceptional affection for them and would do everything to protect them from any harm¹. (7)

Oh respected Lord (“*gōsā’īm*”—i.e. Garud)! It is just like the case of a child developing a sore boil on his body when his loving mother would get it operated and removed inspite of this procedure causing a lot of transient pain to the child². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the merciful Lord nips the trouble in the bud by taking necessary steps to eradicate this negativity from his devotee. Though at first it may cause a lot of heartburn in the afflicted person, but like a good doctor the Lord prefers this than to let his devotee suffer an irreparable damage and a lot of torment in the long run.

The celestial sage Narad too had once developed ‘Abhimaan’ in him. The occasion was Narad wishing to marry a pretty girl inspite of being an exalted sage and one who had vowed to renounce all attractions for sensual pleasures. Lord Vishnu tried to warn him from falling prey to this trap by indicating to him about his excellent virtues for which Narad was so dear to the Lord and was revered by the whole world. So the Lord praised him for his excellent virtues of renunciation, possession of knowledge, self-control over his senses and devotion for the Lord amongst others so as to hint to Narad to be careful. But since Narad was overcome by passion, he did not understand the hidden meaning of the Lord’s praise, but rather became very proud that the Supreme Lord has praised him. The Lord did not like it, and to ensure Narad remains free from this, he manoeuvred things in such a way that Narad could not marry. This entire story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to 139.

But more specifically to our topic, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 129 where Lord Vishnu has thought to himself that he needs to remove ‘Abhimaan’ from the mind and heart of Narad.

As far as delusions and getting distracted by them being the cause of countless sorrows, miseries, grief and pain is concerned, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 28-37 that precede it.

²This is explained further in the following Doha no. 74. The mother holds her breath and pays no attention to the child’s yelling and throwing fits while the doctor removes the boil, but she knows that it is for the long-term good for her beloved infant. The momentary stern behaviour of the mother while she hold the child as he kicks and yells in pain while the boil is being attended to by the doctor does not mean that she is merciless or wishes the child to suffer, but she has the future of the child in mind. Likewise, the merciful Lord Ram too pays no attention to the momentary agitation that his devotee undergoes while the Lord creates a condition whereby his negative traits are destroyed. It often happens that in the process it is the Lord who himself has to suffer and take the blame, as it happened in the case of Narad who had cursed Lord Vishnu when the latter did not allow him to fall in the trap of temptations caused by libido, passion and lust when Narad wanted to marry a girl as narrated in the verses cited in note no. 1 herein above. The Lord took the curse cheerfully and in his stride, and he did not become angry on Narad, just like the mother who smilingly copes with the tantrums thrown by the child, his kicking and biting and yelling as she holds him tightly while the surgeon treats the boil.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 43 where Lord Ram has told Narad precisely this thing—that he

treats his devotees like a mother treats her infant child, and therefore it is his responsibility to take proper care of them and see to it that their happiness is not compromised.]

दो०. जदपि प्रथम दुख पावइ रोवइ बाल अधीर ।

ब्याधि नास हित जननी गनति न सो सिसु पीर ॥ ७४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

jadapi prathama dukha pāva'i rōva'i bāla adhīra.

byādhi nāsa hita janani ganati na sō sisu pīra. 74 (a).

Though the child suffers immense pain and becomes very agitated in the beginning due to his ailment, the kind and loving mother does not pay any heed to it because it is for the child's own good that his disease is cured. (Doha no. 74-a).

तिमि रघुपति निज दास कर हरहिं मान हित लागि ।

तुलसिदास ऐसे प्रभुहि कस न भजहु भ्रम त्यागि ॥ ७४ (ख) ॥

timi raghupati nija dāsa kara harahim māna hita lagi.

tulasidāsa aisē prabhuhi kasa na bhajahu bhrama tyāgi. 74 (b).

Similarly, Lord Raghunath (Sri Ram) removes the sense of pride and ego from his servants ("nija dāsa"—i.e. his faithful and loving devotees, followers and subordinates who are dependent upon him) because it is for their own good and welfare.

Tulsidas asserts—'Why should one not abandon all kinds of delusions and doubts, and instead adore, worship and have devotion for such a Lord who is so exceptionally kind, gracious, benevolent and merciful that he is so concerned about the good and well-being of his devotees.'¹ (Doha no. 74-b)

[Note—¹To wit, it is in the interest of the devotee himself to have unwavering devotion and faith in such a gracious Lord as Sri Ram who is so worried about the welfare of his devotees that he would not let any negative trait remain in him so that the happiness in the future of the devotee is assured. Say, who would not like to have such a Lord for himself; who would not admire this quality in his Master?

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43.]

चौ०. राम कृपा आपनि जड़ताई । कहउँ खगेस सुनहु मन लाई ॥ १ ॥

जब जब राम मनुज तनु धरहीं । भक्त हेतु लीला बहु करहीं ॥ २ ॥

तब तब अवधपुरी मैं जाऊँ । बालचरित बिलोकि हरषाऊँ ॥ ३ ॥

जन्म महोत्सव देखउँ जाई । बरष पाँच तहँ रहउँ लोभाई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

rāma kṛpā āpani jaratā'ī. kaha'um' khagēsa sunahu mana lā'ī. 1.
 jaba jaba rāma manuja tanu dharahīm. bhakta hētu līlā bahu karahīm. 2.
 taba taba avadhapurī mairī jā'um'. bālacarita bilōki haraṣā'um'. 3.
 janma mahōtsava dēkha'um' jā'ī. baraṣa pāmca taham' raha'um' lōbhā'ī. 4.

[Continuing with his discourse, Kaagbhusund told Garud—] Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa)! Now listen attentively to my narration where I would describe Lord Ram's benevolence and grace on the one hand, and my own misdemeanours, travesty, grossness and stupidity on the other hand. (1)

Whenever Lord Ram assumes a human form on earth and plays countless sports (performs many marvellous deeds) for the benefit of his devotees¹, --- (2)

--- On all those auspicious occasions I go to Ayodhya (the city where Lord Ram takes a birth as a human child), and I feel exhilarated in my heart when I observe the Lord's playful activities as a child². (3)

I go there to witness the grand celebrations of the Lord's birth, and then I feel so charmed and fascinated by it that I abide there for around five more years to participate in and enjoy the euphoria that prevails in Ayodhya during that time. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 110; Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 114; Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 121; and Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122 where it is said that there are a variety of reasons why Lord Ram takes a human form and descends on earth.

Like our own world, the cosmos or the universe consists of countless other worlds. Each exists in a different time-space frame, and each has its own tale of the Lord revealing himself on different occasions due to different causes. This mystical and astonishing revelation has been made by Kaagbhusund who had personally roamed in these universes and seen many forms of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, there in different stages of playing his divine sport. This is clearly narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 81; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 89; and Chaupai line no. 12-14 that precede Doha no. 114.]

इष्टदेव मम बालक रामा । सोभा बपुष कोटि सत कामा ॥ ५ ॥
 निज प्रभु बदन निहारि निहारी । लोचन सुफल करउँ उरगारी ॥ ६ ॥
 लघु बायस बपु धरि हरि संगी । देखउँ बालचरित बहु रंगी ॥ ७ ॥

iṣṭadēva mama bālaka rāmā. sōbhā bapuṣa kōṭi sata kāmā. 5.
 nija prabhu badana nihārī nihārī. lōcana suphala kara'um' uragārī. 6.
 laghu bāyasa bapu dhari hari saṅgā. dēkha'um' bālacarita bahu raṅgā. 7.

The form of the Lord as a child is my favourite deity I am very much fond of. This form is extremely beautiful and charming so much so that it is equivalent to the bewitching attraction of millions of Kaamdeos (Cupid; the patron God of bewitching beauty and charm) who appear to have spread their combined magic on the Lord's form¹. (5)

Oh the enemy of serpents (i.e. Garud—"uragārī")! I fill my eyes to my heart's content with the beauteous and divine sight of my Lord, and this allows my eyes to feel contented and fulfilled by this experience; they get the reward of their existence². (6)

I assume a diminutive form of a humble little and harmless crow, and roam around free with the Lord in close proximity with him. This enables me to fulfil my dream of watching the many sports of the Lord from close quarters³. (7)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund's Guru, moral guide and preceptor, had advised him to meditate upon the beauteous form of Lord Ram as a child while giving him 'Diskha and Mantra', i.e. at the time of his formal initiation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 113.

²A similar idea is expressed in the case of the demon Marich who was forced by Ravana to assume the form of a golden deer so that Sita can be abducted. At that time also Marich had felt very fortunate that he would be able to glance at the lovely form of Lord Ram who would be chasing him from behind in order to shoot him and make him captive. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 26 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

Similarly, sage Sutikshan too felt exulted and euphoric that he would be able to fill his eyes with the divine sight of Lord Ram when he came to know that the Lord was heading his way in the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it Doha no. 10.

³As a crow, no one can stop me from entering the place where Lord Ram plays in the courtyard. I hop and jump around the place at my liberty. This ploy of mine serves my purpose best as it does not arouse any suspicion in anyone's mind about my real identity and intent. I am allowed free access to the Lord, and the all-knowing Lord knows who I am and why I am there, so he freely obliges me by merrily playing with me, running around the place chasing me and pricking my ears and body! Say, how fortunate I am indeed.]

दो०. लरिकाई जहँ जहँ फिरहिँ तहँ तहँ संग उड़ाउँ ।

जूठनि परइ अजिर महँ सो उठाइ करि खाउँ ॥ ७५ (क) ॥

dōhā.

larikā'īm jaham̃ jaham̃ phirahim̃ taham̃ taham̃ saṅga uṛā'um̃.
jūṭhani para'i ajira maham̃ sō uṭhā'i kari khā'um̃. 75 (a).

Wherever Lord Ram goes around as a child, I accompany him everywhere by flying alongside. When he eats something and discards the leftovers, I pounce upon it and

eat it myself. [This becomes a ‘Prasad’ or sanctified food for me, and to add glory to such food it is offered to me by my deity himself. So I pounce upon it immediately and gobble it down so that I don’t miss the golden opportunity of partaking of such a holy food.] (Doha no. 75-a)

एक बार अतिसय सब चरित किए रघुबीर ।
सुमिरत प्रभु लीला सोइ पुलकित भयउ सरीर ॥ ७५ (ख) ॥

ēka bāra atisaya saba carita ki'ē raghubīra.
sumirata prabhu līlā sō'i pulakita bhaya'u sarīra. 75 (b).

It so happened once that Lord Raghubir (Sri Ram, the brave Lord of the Raghu’s line of Kings) performed some stupendous deeds that were so esoteric and mystical that by merely remembering them Kaagbhusund felt exhilarated and his body became thrilled. (Doha no. 75-b)

चौ०. कहइ भसुंड सुनहु खगनायक । रामचरित सेवक सुखदायक ॥ १ ॥
नृपमंदिर सुंदर सब भाँती । खचित कनक मनि नाना जाती ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

kaha'i bhasuṇḍa sunahu khaganāyaka. rāmacarita sēvaka sukhadāyaka. 1.
nṛpamandira sundara saba bhāmṭī. khacita kanaka mani nānā jāṭī. 2.

[Kaagbhusund now describes the beauteous form of the child Ram as he had seen it when he stayed in the palace with Lord Ram during the Lord’s childhood days at Ayodhya. He told Garud—]

‘Listen oh the Chief of Birds (sunahu khaganāyaka)! The divine and holy story of Lord Ram gives delight, joy and happiness to his followers, supporters, subordinates and devotees¹. (1)

The palace of the King (Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya, in whose household Lord Vishnu had manifested in the form of a Lord Ram) was wonderful and charming by all means. It was a golden palace with priceless gems studded on its walls². (2)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “sēvaka”—which literally means one who serves. There are many categories of people who can serve the Lord—e.g. a servant, a subordinate, a follower, or a devotee of the Lord. The word does not actually refer to a servant or a subordinate in the sense these words are used in day-to-day life—i.e. a person who is employed by someone on a fixed salary to attend to his household chores and do domestic duties; or a person employed by the government or the king to attend to official duties. In the spiritual context the word ‘sēvaka’ would mean someone who is faithful and loyal to the Lord God, who follows the spiritual principles of life and Dharma as laid down by the Lord, who is devoted to the Lord and serves the cause of the Lord selflessly and to the best of his ability, expecting only the blessing, grace and mercy of the Lord, and having no desire for gaining any

kind of pecuniary or any other kind of worldly benefit by this service done to the Lord.

²The description that appears here, that of the wonderful beauty of Lord Ram as a child as experienced by Kaagbhusund, is quite similar to the days of the Lord's childhood and adolescence, about his fascinating pastimes when he played many pranks and acted mischievously like an ordinary boy much to the amusement and fascination of his mother Kaushalya and father Dasrath, as well as of the magical charm he had spread over the entire city of Ayodhya and mesmerised its citizens, giving them the joy and happiness of their lives, has also been described in detail earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198—to Doha no. 199; and from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 200—to Doha no. 205.]

बरनि न जाइ रुचिर अँगनाई । जहँ खेलहिं नित चारिउ भाई ॥ ३ ॥
बालबिनोद करत रघुराई । बिचरत अजिर जननि सुखदाई ॥ ४ ॥

barani na jā'i rucira aṁṁgānā'ī. jaham' khēlahim nita cāri'u bhā'ī. 3.
bālabinōda karata raghurā'ī. bicarata ajira janani sukhadā'ī. 4.

It is difficult for me to describe the beauty and the magnificence of the courtyard of the palace where the four divine brothers¹ played everyday. (3)

The Lord of the Raghus ("raghurā'ī"—i.e. Lord Ram) frolicked in this courtyard as he moved around in it, performing many childish pranks and engaged in many pastimes much to the amusement of his mother (Kaushalya). (4)

[Note—¹The 'four brothers' are Lord Ram, who was the eldest, and his three younger siblings Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.]

मरकत मृदुल कलेवर स्यामा । अंग अंग प्रति छबि बहु कामा ॥ ५ ॥
नव राजीव अरुन मृदु चरना । पदज रुचिर नख ससि दुति हरना ॥ ६ ॥

marakata mṛdula kalēvara syāmā. aṅga aṅga prati chabi bahu kāmā. 5.
nava rājīva aruna mṛdu caranā. padaja rucira nakha sasi duti haranā. 6.

The Lord's tender body had a dark complexion with a green tinge that resembled an emerald. It appeared as if each part of the Lord's body, each of his organs, reflected the composite charm and beauty of countless Kaamdeos (the patron god of beauty, charm and physical attraction; cupid). (5)

His feet were soft, and they looked like a fresh lotus flower that has a light red hue in it. Similarly, the fingers were also extremely well-shaped and attractive, and had nails that outshined the brilliance of the full moon. (6)

ललित अंक कुलिसादिक चारी । नूपुर चारु मधुर रवकारी ॥ ७ ॥
 चारु पुराट मनि रचित बनाई । कटि किंकिनि कल मुखर सुहाई ॥ ८ ॥

lalita aṅka kulisādika cārī. nūpura cāru madhura ravakārī. 7.
 cāru puraṭa mani racita banāī. kaṭi kiṅkini kala mukhara suhāī. 8.

On the sole of the Lord's feet there were holy marks such as that of the 'Vajra' ("kulisādika"—i.e. the thunderbolt, the goad, the flag and the lotus; these signs are present on the sole of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being).

Lovely anklets adorned the feet of the Lord, and from them emanated a sweet sound as the Lord moved. (7)

The golden waist-band that he wore had priceless gems and jewels studded on it, and it produced a very pleasant tinkling sound (from the tiny bells hanging from it). (8)

दो०. रेखा त्रय सुंदर उदर नाभी रुचिर गँभीर ।
 उर आयत भ्राजत बिबिधि बाल बिभूषन चीर ॥ ७६ ॥
 dōhā.

rēkhā traya sundara udara nābhī rucira gaṁbhīra.
 ura āyata bhrājata bibidhi bāla bibhūṣana cīra. 76.

There were three pretty folds of skin on his abdomen with a lovely navel that was made attractive by its depth.

Countless ornaments and clothes befitting a child adorned his large and well-built chest. (Doha no. 76)

चौ०. अरुन पानि नख करज मनोहर । बाहु बिसाल बिभूषन सुंदर ॥ १ ॥
 कंध बाल केहरि दर ग्रीवा । चारु चिबुक आनन छबि सीवा ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

aruna pāni nakha karaja manōhara. bāhu bisāla bibhūṣana sundara. 1.
 kandha bāla kēhari dara grīvā. cāru cibuka ānana chabi sīvā. 2.

Red lotus like palms of the hands with the fingers and their nails were so lovely to look at that they literally stole the beholder's mind and heart. His long arms were adorned by beautiful ornaments. [To wit, the person who looked at the Lord's hands was mesmerised by their beauty and charm.] (1)

His shoulders were muscular and well-built like those of a lion's cub. His neck was smooth and rounded, shaped like a conch. His chin too was pretty, and of course his face was an epitome of beauty in its perfection. (2)

कलबल बचन अधर अरुनारे । दुइ दुइ दसन बिसद बर बारे ॥ ३ ॥

ललित कपोल मनोहर नासा । सकल सुखद ससि कर सम हासा ॥ ४ ॥

kalabala bacana adhara arunārē. du'i du'i dasana bisada bara bārē. 3.
lalita kapōla manōhara nāsā. sakala sukhada sasi kara sama hāsā. 4.

His (child Ram's) speech was yet indistinct as he talked with a lisp in it. His lips were red in colour. Inside the lips (i.e. in the Lord's mouth) there were two rows of small teeth that were glittering white. (3)

His cheeks were pretty; his nose was lovely; and his smile was so bewitchingly sweet and pleasant that it resembled the soothing rays of the full moon's light that gives delight and exhilaration to one's heart and mind. (4)

नील कंज लोचन भव मोचन । भ्राजत भाल तिलक गोरोचन ॥ ५ ॥

बिकट भृकुटि सम श्रवन सुहाए । कुंचित कच मेचक छबि छाए ॥ ६ ॥

nīla kanja lōcana bhava mōcana. bhrājata bhāla tilaka gōrōcana. 5.
bikaṭa bhr̥kuṭi sama śravana suhā'ē. kuñcita kaca mēcaka chabi chā'ē. 6.

The eyes (of child Ram) were like a blue lotus flower; their glance frees a creature from the bondage of birth and death in this gross mortal world (i.e. they free the creature from the cycle of transmigration; the Lord's merciful glance provides the fortunate one with the fruit of liberation and deliverance from this world).

A sacred Tilak mark made by a yellow pigment called 'GoroChan'¹ adorns his forehead. (5)

His eyebrows are arched, and his ears are well proportioned and contoured. The beauty of dark curly hair that adorns his head and dangle over his ears and forehead add to the fascinating and bewitching charm of the Lord's face. (6)

[Note—¹The 'Tilak' is worn by Hindus as a sacred sign marked on their forehead. It acquires different forms. Followers of Lord Vishnu make 2 vertical lines, usually in the form of a tuning fork with a dot in the center of the upright lines, while those of Lord Shiva have 2 horizontal lines with a dot in the middle. This 'dot' represents 'Shakti' or the cosmic power of the Lord.

The 'GoroChan' is a yellow coloured pigment secreted in the bile of a cow and is collected when the cow vomits. It is mixed with cow-dung, cow's urine and other herbs, and made into a sticky paste that is applied on the forehead as a religious symbol called a Tilak.]

पीत झीनि झगुली तन सोही । किलकनि चितवनि भावति मोही ॥ ७ ॥

रूप रासि नृप अजिर बिहारी । नाचहिं निज प्रतिबिंब निहारी ॥ ८ ॥

pīta jhīni jhagulī tana sōhī. kilakani citavani bhāvati mōhī. 7.
rūpa rāsi nrpa ajira bihārī. nācahiṃ nija pratibimba nihārī. 8.

A yellow coloured frock made of soft and light fabric (silk or cotton) adorned the Lord's body. I was held in thrall and was greatly charmed and enthused by his shrill cry of joy and glances thrown at me. (7)

The Lord was a treasury of exceptional beauty, charm and wonder as he played and moved around in the palace courtyard of king Dasrath. When he saw his own image or shadow, he was so fascinated by this wonderful sight that he began to dance in merry abandon. (8)

मोहि सन करहिं बिबिधि बिधि क्रीड़ा । बरनत मोहि होति अति ब्रीड़ा ॥ ९ ॥
किलकत मोहि धरन जब धावहिं । चलउँ भागि तब पूष देखावहिं ॥ १० ॥

mōhi sana karahim bibidhi bidhi krīṛā. baranata mōhi hōti ati brīṛā. 9.
kilakata mōhi dharana jaba dhāvahim. cala'um' bhāgi taba pūpa dēkhāvahim.
10.

All the while, as soon as he spotted me hopping around, he would play with me in various ways. Verily indeed, it was such a mystical experience that now I feel shy to narrate them; I blush at the very thought of those exhilarating moments that sent goose bumps through my body. (9)

Making a shrill cry of excitement to show his pleasure, when the Lord dashed at me in order to catch hold of me, I used to run away. So the Lord would tempt me to come nearer by holding some sweet in his hands and proffering it to me¹. [Such moments were so entertaining and thrilling, as well as emotionally and spiritually fulfilling that I feel goose bumps when I remember them even now.] (10)

[Note—¹Similar incidents with a little difference were experienced by mother Kaushalya as described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 203. Here, when his father king Dasrath called the child Ram to come near him to share some sweet with him, the Lord ran away, tottering and falling and picking himself again. Mother Kaushalya would run behind the child, and the latter would give a shrill cry and run faster ahead to escape being caught by his mother!]

दो०. आवत निकट हंसहिं प्रभु भाजत रुदन कराहिं ।
जाउँ समीप गहन पद फिरि फिरि चितइ पराहिं ॥ ७७ (क) ॥
dōhā.

āvata nikaṭa haṃśahim prabhu bhājata rudana karāhim.
jā'um' samīpa gahana pada phiri phiri cita'i parāhim. 77 (a).

When I came near the Lord he began to laugh; and when I ran away from him he started crying!

When I approached him to touch his holy feet, he would run away from me but kept glancing back at me as he did so. [In all sooth and without gainsay, it is really such a fascinating and wonderful sight to imagine: the Lord and Kaagbhusund playing hide-and-seek with each other!! Indeed, how fortunate was Kaagbhusund.] (Doha no. 77-a)

प्राकृत सिसु इव लीला देखि भयउ मोहि मोह ।
कवन चरित्र करत प्रभु चिदानंद संदोह ॥ ७७ (ख) ॥

prākṛta sisu iva līlā dēkhi bhaya'u mōhi mōha.
kavana caritra karata prabhu cidānanda sandōha. 77 (b).

When I observed this play of the Lord which was done like an ordinary human child, I was confused and overcome with doubts.

I wondered about the way the Lord is behaving: He being the Supreme Lord of the World, one who is pure Cosmic Consciousness and an embodiment of true Knowledge and Bliss, why would he play like an ordinary child and derive so much pleasure from such worldly activities?¹ (Doha no. 77-b)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund is building a ground to explain to Garud the complexities and paradoxes associated with the ‘truth’ of Lord Ram. There are so many things that look different from what they actually are.

Garud was confused and filled with doubt about the divine nature of Lord Ram when he had seen the Lord tied up by snakes in the battle-field of Lanka just like Kaagbhusund got perplexed and utterly bewildered by seeing Lord Ram acting like an ordinary human child. In the narrative that follows herein below, we would read that when Lord Ram saw the confused face of Kaagbhusund, the Lord showed him his cosmic form, the vast and all-encompassing form that harboured all the universes within its self. Kaagbhusund actually flew around some of them, and was awe-struck with what he saw. This convinced him that the child he was playing with was no ordinary one, but the Supreme Being himself.]

चौ०. एतना मन आनत खगराया । रघुपति प्रेरित व्यापी माया ॥ १ ॥
सो माया न दुखद मोहि काहीं । आन जीव इव संसृत नाहीं ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

ētanā mana ānata khagarāyā. raghupati prērita byāpī māyā. 1.
sō māyā na dukhada mōhi kāhīm. āna jīva iva sansṛta nāhīm. 2.

Oh the King of Birds (“khagarāyā”—i.e. Garud)! The moment I allowed doubt to enter my mind, the Lord’s delusive power called ‘Maya’, being directed by the Lord of the Raghus (i.e. by Lord Ram), took control over me (or came to possess me). (1)

But this Maya did not become a cause for worries, troubles or sorrows for me, and neither did it throw me into the whirlpool of birth and death so typical of other living beings in this world who come under the spell of Maya¹. (2)

[Note—¹Usually Maya creates a horde of problems for a creature. For instance, when Narad had been overcome by Maya, he became so much deluded that he developed infatuation for a pretty girl and determined to marry her at all costs, forgetting that he was a sage and had taken a vow of renunciation and detachment, and was supposed to be free from sensual attractions. The horrible effect of Maya was so intense that when Narad could not marry that maiden of his choice, he had cursed his own beloved Lord Vishnu because he felt that the Lord had prevented him from marrying her. This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 139.

So Kaagbhusund is quick to clarify that in his case, though the Maya was ordered by Lord Ram to come and cast its shadow over him, it was not to cause any sort of trouble to him, but was an excuse by which the Lord would show him some great sight that he had not hitherto shown to anyone else. In this sense the shadow of Maya was a blessing in disguise for Kaagbhusund. This was to be expected—because Lord Ram had been playing with Kaagbhusund fondly a while ago, and being immensely merciful and kind the Lord just couldn't throw his dear friend and playmate into the pit of hell by tying him down by the snare of delusions. After all, the Lord is the one who frees a creature from the troubles created by Maya, so how can he put his dear devotee Kaagbhusund into a new kind of trouble?

Maya or delusions and Bhakti or devotion, both have been classified as being maids of Lord Ram. But the Lord is favourable towards Bhakti because it represents noble and virtuous qualities in a creature that uplift his soul, whereas Maya is simply like a dancing girl as it represents worldly taints and evil qualities that are spiritually demeaning for the creature. So if a creature has the virtue of Bhakti for the Lord in him, Maya is sore affright to disturb such a creature because it would offend the Lord as he prefers Bhakti over Maya.

Bhakti and Maya are treated as 'females or maids'. This is because their 'Lord' here is Sri Ram, a manifested human 'male' form of the Supreme Being who was also a 'King' of Ayodhya. The Upanishads and other Vedic texts call the Supreme Being as the 'Viraat Purush', the Cosmic Male. Another word used as a synonym for the Supreme Being is 'Brahm', but Brahm represents the very basis of creation, i.e. the Cosmic Consciousness that has no gender. When this Cosmic Consciousness started the process of creation, there evolved, in a step-by-step manner and in an increasingly grosser form, a cosmic Male and a cosmic Female to give shape to and help in self-propagation of the forthcoming creation, and to maintain its self-perpetuating forward movement in the form of a never ending cycle of creation and destruction. The primary form of the Cosmic Male was known as the 'Viraat Purush' ("Male") and the primary form of the Cosmic Female was known as the 'Shakti' (the Male's authority, powers, dynamism and energy to act and do something).

As in all cases where 'Shakti' is involved, it can turn out to be either 'bad' or 'good'. If it is 'good' then this Shakti is loved by the Lord; if it turns out to be 'bad', it is disliked by the Lord. This is what happens in practice with Bhakti and Maya respectively. Whereas the Lord favours Bhakti, he abhors Maya, though both are under his domain and command.

Remember: These are symbolic ways of explaining complicated metaphysical principles which basically mean that if a living being has the good virtue of devotion and faith for the Lord God inside him, the negative traits associated with delusions would not darken his inner-self.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46; and (iii) Doha no. 116 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.]

नाथ इहाँ कछु कारन आना । सुनहु सो सावधान हरिजाना ॥ ३ ॥
ग्यान अखंड एक सीताबर । माया बस्य जीव सचराचर ॥ ४ ॥

nātha ihām̐ kachu kārana ānā. sunahu sō sāvadhāna harijānā. 3.
gyāna akhaṇḍa ēka sītābara. māyā basya jīva sacarācara. 4.

Oh Lord (“nātha”—Garud), there was a different reason why the Lord ordered Maya to cast its spell on me. Oh the devotee of Lord Hari (“harijānā”—i.e. Garud, who was a mount of Lord Hari who is also known by the name of Lord Vishnu), I shall describe it to you; listen carefully¹. (3)

It is Lord Ram, the beloved husband of Sita (sītābara)², who alone is an eternal fount of absolute and truthful knowledge, the Lord who is an embodiment of perfect knowledge (i.e. the Lord is free from the clutches of ‘delusions’ as ‘knowledge and delusions’ can’t co-exist), while the rest of creatures in this world, both the animate as well the inanimate, are subject to the influences of Maya (delusions)³. (4)

[Note—¹The choice of the word “harijānā” to address Garud is excellent here. The word means ‘one who knows Lord Hari’, or ‘Understand the truth of Lord Hari by properly paying attention to what I am going to narrate now’. Kaagbhusund wished to remove any sort of doubt in the mind of Garud at the very beginning of the narration itself because he was apprehensive that Garud might be alarmed when told that ‘Maya overcame Kaagbhusund on the instructions of Lord Ram’. He may wonder ‘How come this happened?’

So, the wise sage Kaagbhusund uses the word “harijānā” to tell Garud that he would be well-advised to listen to some of the maverick plays of the Lord and how these are for the good of the Lord’s devotees, instead of being detrimental for their well-being.

²Again there is a wise choice of a word while referring to Lord Ram. Kaagbhusund uses the word “sītābara”—meaning the husband of Sita. On the face of it Lord Ram appears to be like ordinary human beings who take birth and marry someone, in this case Ram marrying Sita. So, is he an ordinary man, or is he the Supreme Being? This is the very question that had vexed Garud, and so Kaagbhusund directly addresses the root of the problem by invoking that form of the Lord who marries a woman known as Sita who gets kidnapped by some vile villain in the forest, and her husband, Sri Ram, goes searching for her, discovers her in the captivity of some demon by the name of Ravana, launches a campaign to free her, and gets embroiled in a ferocious war at Lanka where he gets tied in a snare of serpents from which he couldn’t free

himself and needed the help of Garud to set him free. As we must recall, this was the primary cause of perplexity for Garud: how can such a person be the Supreme Being?

Hence, Kaagbhusund catches the bull by the horn by calling Lord Ram the ‘husband of Sita’ to directly answer Garud’s question about the truth and reality of the Lord.

³Therefore in this Chaupai line no. 4, Kaagbhusund answers this vexed question that had been tormenting Garud for so long by saying that the same person who is the ‘husband of Sita’ is the ‘Lord of perfect knowledge’.

To wit, this eclectic quality of having perfect and absolute knowledge distinguishes Lord Ram from the rest of the living beings in this world.

A similar idea is expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 200; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 117.

In Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 13, the Vedas have said a similar thing when they appeared to offer prayers to Lord Ram at the time of his coronation. The Vedas asserted that the Lord’s Maya is so huge, invincible and intractable that it has stolen or overshadowed the wisdom and intellect of all the Gods, the Demons, the Nagas, the Human beings, and the rest of the animate as well as the inanimate world.]

जौं सब कें रह ग्यान एकरस । ईस्वर जीवहि भेद कहहु कस ॥ ५ ॥

माया बस्य जीव अभिमानी । ईस बस्य माया गुनखानी ॥ ६ ॥

jauṁ saba kēṁ raha gyāna ēkarasa. īsvara jīvahi bhēda kahahu kasa. 5.
māyā basya jīva abhimānī. īsa basya māyā gunakhānī. 6.

Say, if all the living beings or the creatures (jīva) have perfect and absolute knowledge, then what would be the difference them and the Lord God (īsvara)¹?

[To wit, the distinguishing factor between the Lord and the rest of the creation is the quality of perfect, truthful and absolute knowledge that the Lord possesses and others don’t have.] (5)

The Jiva (living being) is under the influence of Maya which makes them proud, egoistic and haughty (abhimānī). The Maya, which has the three basic qualities called ‘Gunas’ that determine all characters and behaviours of the creatures in this world (māyā gunakhānī)², itself is under the control of the Lord God (īsa). (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 16 where Laxman has asked a similar question regarding the difference between a Jiva and Ishwara. Lord Ram has explained to him in detail on the same lines as Kaagbhusund outlines here.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130 also.

According to the Upanishads, there are three basic qualities in all living beings that determine their thoughts, behaviour, attitude, actions and character. They are

called Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. Maya has all these three Gunas as its basic ingredient.

Since all the creatures have these three Gunas in varying proportions, they are all said to be under the influence of Maya in varying degrees. It is only Lord Ram who is neutral to them; the three Gunas cancel each other in Lord Ram, and therefore he is above Maya. This is what marks the difference between the Lord and other living beings.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130 where a similar idea is expressed.

Now, let us see briefly what these three Gunas are:-

(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajsic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities

such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The Vasanas that have the Tama Guna in dominance are regarded as the ‘bad Vasanas’ or better still the ‘worst type of Vasana’ that any individual can have.

These Gunas, in varying ratios and mixtures, decide the character and personality of any given unit of creation. In modern world we recognize them as the ‘gene’ special to that individual, the ‘gene’ which makes each individual so unique in this creation. These Gunas can also be compared to the various shades and hues of colours that a painter uses to paint a picture or a portrait and inject life and uniqueness to it. Even the same painter cannot duplicate exactly a picture again—there is bound to be a difference between any two pictures or portraits no matter how invisible, imperceptible, microscopic and subtle it might be.]

परबस जीव स्वबस भगवंता । जीव अनेक एक श्रीकंता ॥ ७ ॥

मुधा भेद जद्यपि कृत माया । बिनु हरि जाइ न कोटि उपाया ॥ ८ ॥

parabasa jīva svabasa bhagavantā. jīva anēka ēka śrīkantā. 7.
mudhā bhēda jadyapi kṛta māyā. binu hari jā'i na kōṭi upāyā. 8.

In the context of what has been said herein before, the Jiva (creature) is dependent on the Gunas, and hence is at the mercy of Maya, while the Lord God (bhagavantā) is free from such dependence¹.

Further, there are countless Jivas (i.e. there are countless forms of living beings in this creation), whereas the beloved Lord of Laxmi (“śrīkantā”—a reference to Lord Vishnu who is the Supreme Being and who had manifested himself in the form of Lord Ram) is one, immutable and indivisible. (7)

Though this difference (between the individual living being and the Supreme Being) that Maya has artificially created is not real², but this misconception cannot be erased without the grace of Lord Hari upon the creature³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 11 where Lord Shiva tells Parvati that all living beings are made to dance to the tune or wishes of Lord Ram. And how does the Lord does this? Well, he uses his Maya for this.

Other instances in Ram Charit Manas where it is said that the puppeteer is Lord Ram himself, while the rest of the world is like a puppet are the following: (i)

Baal Kand, Doha no. 124; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263; (iii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 15; (iv) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 24 that precedes Doha no. 7; (v) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 117.

²According to the metaphysical philosophy of the Upanishads, the true identity of a living being is his or her 'Atma' or soul. This Atma is pure consciousness that is known as the 'true self' of the concerned individual. Further, this individual Atma is an image of the cosmic Atma known as the 'Parmatma', the Supreme Atma. The latter is therefore the Cosmic Consciousness. The Atma is an invisible, eternal, sublime and subtle entity as opposed to the physical body of the creature which is visible, gross and mortal.

So therefore, there is no primary difference between the 'true self' of the individual creature, i.e. his Atma, and the Lord God who represents the Supreme Atma. This phenomenon can be easily understood by a simple example. The water of the ocean taken in a cup would be the same as the water present in the main body of the ocean itself. There is no primary difference between the two, but for a person with a low intellect there does exist a difference. For instance, he would argue that the water in the cup can be measured while that in the ocean cannot be.

³Just like a person who happens to be lucky enough to have studied in a college under the guidance of a teacher of science who would explain to him that there is no basic difference between the water in the cup and that in the ocean as both have the same chemical formula of H₂O, those creatures on whom Lord Ram becomes graceful and benevolent in the sense that they become enlightened and self-realised learn that there is no distinction between their own Atma and the Parmatma that the Lord represents.

To wit, such self-realised persons become 'one with the Lord'; all distinctions and differences are erased. And this implies that Maya could not influence them.]

दो०. रामचंद्र के भजन बिनु जो चह पद निर्बान ।

ग्यानवंत अपि सो नर पसु बिनु पूँछ बिषान ॥ ७८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

rāmacandra kē bhajana binu jō caha pada nirbāna.

gyānavanta api sō nara pasu binu pūṁcha biṣāna. 78 (a).

If a person wants to attain the highest state of transcendental existence that is equivalent to having liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation without doing 'Bhajan'¹ of Lord Ram-Chandra, then surely and without gainsay he deemed to be utterly stupid and extremely ignorant; such a thinking would make him highly anomalous in spite of the fact that he may be otherwise highly qualified in other fields of knowledge, and may be wise and learned too.

Such a person is like an animal that has no tail or horns. This animal becomes a subject of great mockery, ridicule and derision. Likewise, a person who thinks that he can attain the exalted state of transcendental existence and attain eternal peace without following the path of Bhajan of Lord Ram lives in a fool's paradise². (Doha no. 78-a)

[Note—¹The term used in the text is “Bhajana”. This word has a broad meaning as it incorporates within its ambit such virtues as having devotion, faith, affection, admiration, reverence and love for Lord God. Worshipping the Lord, remembering the Lord, listening to and narrating his divine stories and deeds, selflessly serving the Lord, repeating his holy name and meditating on him, spreading the Lord’s words and ideals, teaching others about them and initiating them into the path of the Lord, and all such related deeds and spiritual exercises are different forms of doing Bhajan. Of course, in general terms, ‘devotion for Lord God’ is usually taken to mean doing Bhajan in a broad sense. This is because devotion itself has many varieties and connotations as explained by Lord Ram to Sabari in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

Earlier, sage Valmiki has also listed many places where Lord Ram resides in a symbolic form. To wit, if a devotee has any of the qualities listed by Valmiki, it means that Lord Ram is close to him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 132.

²It is impossible to attain spiritual bliss, beatitude and felicity, it is impractical to attain eternal peace and blessedness, and it is not feasible to get salvation and emancipation for the soul without having devotion for Lord Ram, and without surrendering oneself before the holy feet of the Lord.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 4; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35; (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 35; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 84; (vi) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 85-b; (vii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precedes Doha no. 119; (viii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-19 that precede it.

All these verses emphasise the importance of Bhakti.]

राकापति षोडस उअहिं तारागन समुदाइ ।

सकल गिरिन्ह दव लाइअ बिनु रबि राति न जाइ ॥ ७८ (ख) ॥

rākāpati ṣoṛasa u'ahim tārāgana samudā'i.

sakala girinha dava lā'i'a binu rabi rāti na jā'i. 78 (b).

It is just like the case that even though the full moon shines with all the sixteen aspects of its brilliance in full splendour, with all the millions of stars lending their own light to it, they cannot remove the darkness of the night as the single sun can do as soon as it rises¹. (Doha no. 78-b)

[Note—¹To wit, no matter how hard a person tries to overcome Maya, no matter how many ways he adopts to accomplish success in this endeavour, he would fail unless he develops devotion for Lord Ram and focuses his mind on the Lord. This in due course would help him gain true knowledge of the Lord and his own self, i.e. about the Atma. As soon as he becomes self-realised and enlightened, all delusions would vanish, and this would be equivalent to attaining freedom from the snare of this gross world of

sense objects that had pulled him towards its self for so long. He finds spiritual peace and happiness, and detachment from the world leads him onwards on the path of emancipation and salvation of his soul.]

चौ०. ऐसेहिं हरि बिनु भजन खगेसा । मिटइ न जीवन्ह केर कलेसा ॥ १ ॥
हरि सेवकहि न व्याप अबिद्या । प्रभु प्रेरित व्यापइ तेहि बिद्या ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

aisēhiṁ hari binu bhajana khagēsā. miṭa'i na jīvanha kēra kalēsā. 1.
hari sēvakahi na byāpa abidyā. prabhu prērita byāpa'i tēhi bidyā. 2.

[Referring to the instances cited in Doha no. 78-b, Kaagbhusund told Garud—] Oh the King of Birds (khagēsā)! In the same manner (as the examples cited by me in Doha no. 78-b herein above), a Jiva's (living being's) miseries, torments and griefs related to life in this gross mortal world of transmigration cannot be mitigated or overcome without 'Bhaja'¹ of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who had manifested as Lord Ram). (1)

'Avidya' (lack of true knowledge; ignorance or lack of awareness of spiritual truth and reality) does not have any influence on the Sevak (follower, devotee, one who serves the Lord selflessly)² of Lord Hari.

On the contrary, by the grace of the Lord, only 'Vidya' (knowledge of the spiritual truth and Brahm, the supreme Consciousness; spiritual awareness; self-realisation with its attendant bliss and beatitude) can have its sway on the Lord's Sevak³. (2)

[Note—¹The term 'Bhajan' has already been explained in a note appended to Doha no. 78-a herein above.

²The term 'Sevak' has been explained in a note appended to Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 76 of this Book.

³To wit, the Lord ensures that his devotee is never tormented by the negative effects of Avidya. The Lord's devotee is always blissful and happy in the shadow of the Lord's grace and benevolence, and this state of beatitude and joy is similar to the one that is attained by acclaimed sages and saints upon self-realisation and Brahm-realisation even though the former, i.e. the Sevak of the Lord, may not be aware of his achievement. It comes to him unasked for; it's the Lord's gift to him.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 116; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede Doha no. 119 where it is clearly stated that 'Avidya' and its associated miseries and torments in this gross mortal world cannot exist simultaneously with the virtue of 'Bhakti' or devotion for Lord God. To wit, if one has Bhakti, one is free from the fear of Avidya.

The benefit that accrues to a devotee of Lord Ram is highlighted in the next verse.]

ताते नास न होइ दास कर । भेद भगति बाढ़इ बिहंगबर ॥ ३ ॥
 भ्रम तें चकित राम मोहि देखा । बिहँसे सो सुनु चरित बिसेषा ॥ ४ ॥

tātē nāsa na hō'i dāsa kara. bhēda bhagati bārha'i bihaṅgabara. 3.
 bhrama tēm cakita rāma mōhi dēkhā. bihamśē sō sunu carita bisēṣā. 4.

Oh the most exalted amongst the birds (“bihaṅgabara”—i.e. Garud)! This is the reason why a ‘dāsa’ of the Lord (i.e. a devotee and follower of the Lord, one who serves the Lord selflessly) does not fall from his path; he does not come to ruin as he is not subjected to distractions, temptations or worldly delusions that are caused by Avidya.

Apart from this benefit (of remaining free from all the miseries associated with Avidya), his level of Bhakti (devotion for the Lord) goes on steadily rising (by the grace of the Lord), and this exponential increase of Bhakti would automatically bring its natural rewards for him (i.e. the obedient servant, the devotee and the follower of the Lord God). (3)

When Lord Ram saw that I was stunned with astonishment, utterly dazed and bewildered by the Lord’s playful tricks and childish behaviour (as described from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 78 herein above), he laughed at me. Now I shall narrate for you that fantastically unique story and its particulars as they unfolded before me. [The events were ‘fantastically unique’ as they were never repeated for anyone else again. I was the only privileged one to have witnessed it.] (4)

तेहि कौतुक कर मरमु न काहँ । जाना अनुज न मातु पिताहँ ॥ ५ ॥
 जानु पानि धाए मोहि धरना । स्यामल गात अरुन कर चरना ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi kautuka kara maramu na kāhūṁ. jānā anuja na mātu pitāhūṁ. 5.
 jānu pāni dhā'ē mōhi dharanā. syāmala gāta aruna kara caranā. 6.

No one, not even the Lord’s own younger brothers (Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) nor his mother (Kaushalya), were aware of the secret that the Lord revealed to me through the mystical deeds that the Lord performed before me.

[To wit, though everyone was around—Lord Ram’s brothers were playing with him and his mother was within earshot—no one knew anything about the vision that I had at that time. The Lord’s magical tricks were limited for my personal viewing. Indeed and in all sooth, this is the unique and special way the Lord blesses his devotees; no one comes to know what transpires between the Lord and his devotee: it’s a secret between the two of them.] (5)

The Lord in his form as a child rushed after me on all fours, i.e. he dashed to catch hold of me by crawling fast on his hands and knees. He had a dark-hued complexion, and his palms and soles were of a red hue (like that of a lotus flower).

[To wit, the Lord smiled and gave out a shrill cry of joy as he dashed after me, crawling on his hands and knees as fast as a child can. It was a marvellous sight of exceptional wonder that I cannot forget!] (6)

तब मैं भागि चलेउँ उरगारी । राम गहन कहँ भुजा पसारी ॥ ७ ॥
जिमि जिमि दूरि उड़ाउँ अकासा । तहँ भुज हरि देखउँ निज पासा ॥ ८ ॥

taba mair̥ bhāgi calē'um̥ uragārī. rāma gahana kham̥ bhujā pasārī. 7.
jimi jimi dūri urā'um̥ akāsā. taham̥ bhuja hari dēkha'um̥ nija pāsā. 8.

Oh the enemy of serpents (“uragārī”—i.e. Garud)! Then I ran away from him (as fast as I could). Lord Ram extended his arms to catch me¹. (7)

[Now the wondrous marvel unfolded before the awe-struck eyes of Kaagbhusund that left him breathless and dazed.] I flew away in the sky, and I discovered that further and further I flew in the sky, I could still see the arms of Lord Hari (the child Lord Ram) following me from close quarters! [To wit, the more away I tried to fly from the Lord, the more the arms came closer and closer to me in hot pursuit.]² (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 77 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it. When we read these verses alongside the present verses, it becomes clear that the play between the child Lord Ram and his devotee Kaagbhusund, who had gone to be near the Lord, disguising himself as a crow so that it did not arouse suspicion, continues. Sometimes Kaagbhusund hopped to be near the Lord even as the Lord crawled away from him, and other times he would run away when the Lord turned back and tried to catch him! It was during this play that the Lord revealed to him the wondrous story that Kaagbhusund now narrates.

²Another similar incident is recorded in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2. Here, the crooked Jayant, the son of Indra, the king of gods, wanted to test the might of Lord Ram. So he assumed the form of a ‘crow’ and went to prick at the feet of Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, as she rested. To punish him, the Lord shot a reed which instantly transformed into an arrow without a head, and it followed Jayant to the heaven and everywhere else he ran to escape being killed.

The similarity and differences between Jayant’s and Kaagbhusund’s episodes are stark. Both were in the physical form of a ‘crow’, and both ran away into the sky. While Jayant was followed by the arrow wherever he went, Kaagbhusund was pursued by the Lord’s arms in a similar manner. The similarity ended there. For while Jayant was a crooked fellow who wanted to test the might of Lord Ram and had been cruel enough to prick at the feet of Sita which resulted in her bleeding, Kaagbhusund was a great and beloved devotee of the Lord and had gone to him to derive spiritual pleasure and bliss by being close to his favoured deity, the child Lord Ram.

Hence, while Jayant was pursued by the arrow to show Lord Ram’s annoyance at him and was made one-eyed in the end as a token punishment, Kaagbhusund was followed by the Lord Ram’s arms that would culminate in his having the cosmic vision of the Lord’s vast and universal form that incorporated the entire universe in it as a gesture of Lord’s blessing upon him.]

दो०. ब्रह्मलोक लागि गयउँ मैं चितयउँ पाछ उड़ात ।

जुग अंगुल कर बीच सब राम भुजहि मोहि तात ॥ ७९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

brahmalōka lagi gaya'um̐ mair̐ citaya'um̐ pācha urāta.

juga aṅgula kara bīca saba rāma bhujahi mōhi tāta. 79 (a).

On dear Garud (tāta)! I went on flying till I reached Brahma's abode in the heaven (known as the brahmalōka), but to my amazement I found that Lord Ram's arms was behind me, and the distance between me and the Lord's arms was only two fingers in its width. (Doha no. 79-a)

सप्ताबरन भेद करि जहाँ लगें गति मोरि ।

गयउँ तहाँ प्रभु भुज निरखि व्याकुल भयउँ बहोरि ॥ ७९ (ख) ॥

saptābarana bhēda kari jahām̐ lagēm̐ gati mōri.

gaya'um̐ tahām̐ prabhu bhuja nirakhi byākula bhaya'um̐ bahōri. 79 (b).

I penetrated all the seven subtle coverings that encircle the universe¹, and went to its outer reaches as far as I could go.

But when I discovered that the Lord's arms were behind me even there, I became flummoxed and alarmed. [To wit, when I found that the arms were pursuing me even in the deep bowls of the cosmos, I virtually panicked. It was like a nightmare for me. I thought that I was hallucinating.] (Doha no. 79-b)

[Note—¹According to metaphysical interpretation of the evolution of creation as envisioned in the Upanishads, there are seven subtle coverings that enclose the entire creation in layers of ascending levels of subtlety. They are the following elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether, cosmic ego known as Ahankar, and cosmic intellect known as Mahattatva or the cosmic Buddhi.

It is believed that the 'earth element' has a thickness of 50 Koti-Yojan, and the colour of this layer is yellow. ['1 Koti' = 10 million; '1 Yojan' = 4 or 8 or 16 miles according to different measuring systems, but generally the median figure of 8 miles in average is taken as a standard measurement.]

The second covering of 'water element' surrounds the earth. It is white in colour and about 500 Koti-Yojan in thickness.

The third layer is that of 'fire element'. Its colour is fiery red. It is about 5000 Koti-Yojan thick.

The fourth layer is 'air element'. Its colour is light green like a swirling dust storm. Its thickness is about 50,000 Koti-Yojan.

The next covering, the fifth one, is that of the 'sky element' that is blue in colour and about 500,000 Koti-Yojan thick.

The sixth layer is the 'cosmic ego' element. Its colour is a mixture of white, black and yellow, but black is the dominant colour. Its thickness is 50,00,000 Koti-Yojan.

The final seventh layer is the 'cosmic intellect' that has the colour of grey to indicate maturity of thought. It fills the space beyond the cosmic ego layer.

The same has been depicted in a different way in the Purans (ancient mythology) which say that there are seven worlds. For instance, according to the Brahmaand Purans (BP) and the Vaaman Puran (VP), the Lokas are the following—‘Bhu/Bhūḥ’ (भूः) or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; ‘Bhuvaha/Bhuvah’ (भुवः) or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; ‘Swaha/Swah’ (स्वः) or the heavens known as Brahma’s abode; the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; ‘Maha/Mah’ (महः) or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yojans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; ‘Janaha/Janah’ (जनः), so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; ‘Tapaha/Tapah’ (तपः) or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and ‘Satyam/Satyam’ (सत्यम्) or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

According to some legends, the distances of various mythological Lokas from the earth or Bhu Loka is as follows—the Bhuvha Loka is situated at a distance of 25 Lakh Yojans from earth, the Swaha Loka is situated at a distance of 50 Lakh Yojans from earth, the Maharloka is situated at a distance of 1 Crore Yojans from earth, the Jana Loka is situated at a distance of 2 Crore Yojans from earth, the Tapa Loka is situated at a distance of 4 Crore Yojans from earth, and the Satya Loka is situated at a distance of 8 Crore Yojans from earth.

1 Yojan = a distance of 4, 8 and 16 miles according to different calculations. It is usually taken to be equivalent to 8 miles.

1 Lakh = one hundred thousand (1,00,000). 1 Crore = ten Lakhs (10 x 1,00,000).

So essentially it means that Kaagbhusund went to the deep recesses of the cosmos where no one had gone earlier. But everywhere he found the arms of Lord Ram just behind him.]

चौ०. मूदेउँ नयन त्रसित जब भयउँ । पुनि चितवत कोसलपुर गयउँ ॥ १ ॥

मोहि बिलोकि राम मुसुकाहीं । बिहँसत तुरत गयउँ मुख माहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mūdē'um̐ nayana trasita jaba bhaya'ūm̐. puni citavata kōsalapura gaya'ūm̐. 1.
mōhi bilōki rāma musukāhīm̐. bihamśata turata gaya'um̐ mukha māhīm̐. 2.

When I was scared out of my wits and highly agitated, being utterly bewildered and confused, I closed my eyes (to prevent my head from reeling further and stabilize it). When I opened them once again I found that I was in Kosalpur (i.e. in Ayodhya).

[To wit, after gathering some courage I slowly opened my eyes and rubbed them. Then I found myself back in the courtyard where I had been playing with the child Lord Ram a while ago.] (1)

[Another miracle happened now.] When Lord Ram saw me, he smiled once again at me (mischievously though). As soon as the Lord opened his mouth, I flew into it. [I thought that this was some new world, and since my mind was already in a delirious state, I quickly entered the Lord's open mouth to hide myself from the nightmare I had experienced just a while ago.]¹ (2)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 55. Here, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, known as Uma, had also witnessed a miraculous sight where she had a divine vision of Lord Ram's cosmic all-incorporating vast form as the Lord of the Universe almost like the way Kaagbhusund experienced and would describe now.

Stunned and dazed by this sight, she was out of her wits and so much sore affright at the consequences of her doubting Shiva's words about the divinity of Lord Ram that she closed her eyes in shock and sat down on the ground as her head swirled round and round like a whirlpool.

Another similar incident—when one got transported miraculously to somewhere else by first closing the eyes and then opening them again—is found in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 25. Here, the group of monkeys and bears who had gone in search of Sita had entered a deep cave in search of water. There they met a female mendicant who advised them to close their eyes and when they would open them they would find themselves at a place from where they can launch their final mission to find Sita. As advised by her, the monkeys and bears first closed their eyes and when they opened them they found themselves on the ocean's shore across which lay the island of Lanka in which Sita was held captive by the demon king Ravana.]

उदर माझ सुनु अंडज राया । देखेउँ बहु ब्रह्मांड निकाया ॥ ३ ॥
अति बिचित्र तहँ लोक अनेका । रचना अधिक एक ते एका ॥ ४ ॥

udara mājha sunu aṇḍaja rāyā. dēkhē'um̐ bahu brahmāṇḍa nikāyā. 3.
ati bicitra taham̐ lōka anēkā. racanā adhika ēka tē ēkā. 4.

Listen oh the King of Birds (“aṇḍaja rāyā”—literally, the king of those who are born from eggs like the birds)! Inside the Lord's abdomen I saw countless clusters of universes in different stages of evolution. (3)

In those universes there were a wide variety of smaller or bigger worlds, each literally more fascinating and stunning than the other. (4)

कोटिन्ह चतुरानन गौरीसा । अगनित उडगन रबि रजनीसा ॥ ५ ॥
अगनित लोकपाल जम काला । अगनित भूधर भूमि बिसाला ॥ ६ ॥

kōṭinha caturānana gaurīsā. aganita uḍagana rabi rajanīsā. 5.
aganita lōkapāla jama kālā. aganita bhūdhara bhūmi bisālā. 6.

In these universes, there were thousands of Brahmas, the four-headed Creator, and Shivas, the Lord of Gauri or Parvati; there were un-countable numbers of stars, suns

and moons (which is called the lord of the night—“*rajanīsa*”); and similarly there were countless Lokapaals (custodians of the different worlds), Yams and Kaals (the gods of hell and death respectively).

Then there were huge mountains and hills and earths of different sizes that could not be counted. (5-6)

सागर सरि सर बिपिन अपारा । नाना भाँति सृष्टि बिस्तारा ॥ ७ ॥

सुर मुनि सिद्ध नाग नर किंनर । चारि प्रकार जीव सचराचर ॥ ८ ॥

sāgara sari sara bipina apārā. nānā bhām̐ti sṛṣṭi bistārā. 7.

sura muni sid'dha nāga nara kinnara. cāri prakāra jīva sacarācara. 8.

Innumerable oceans, rivers, lakes and forests along with many other forms of this magical creation in its extensive variation and expansion were seen by me there. (7)

I also observed a countless numbers and a wide variety of gods, sages, mystics, serpents, humans and semi-gods known as Kinnars, and all the four forms of living beings found in the animate as well as the inanimate world¹.# (8)

[Note—¹The four varieties of living beings are the following—(i) Udbhij: These are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa or aspect of the Atma called Anna Maye Kosh or Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj: They are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj: They are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj: These are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc.

#In brief, Kaagbhusund saw an amazing kaleidoscopic view of creation in all its fascinating variations that mystified, dazed as well as enthralled him no end, as asserted by himself in the next Doha no. 80 herein below.]

दो०. जो नहिं देखा नहिं सुना जो मनहूँ न समाइ ।

सो सब अद्भुत देखेउँ बरनि कवनि बिधि जाइ ॥ ८० (क) ॥

dōhā.

jō nahim dēkhā nahim sunā jō manahūm'na samā'i.
sō saba adbhuta dēkhē'um'barani kavani bidhi jā'i. 80 (a).

What I had never seen, what I had never heard of, and what I just could not imagine in the wildest of my dreams—I saw all such strange things and the most bewildering of sights which I don't know how to describe. (Doha no. 80-a)

एक एक ब्रह्मांड महुँ रहउँ बरष सत एक ।
एहि बिधि देखत फिरउँ मैं अंड कटाह अनेक ॥ ८०(ख) ॥

ēka ēka brahmāṇḍa mahum'raha'um'baraṣa sata ēka.
ēhi bidhi dēkhata phira'um'maim aṇḍa kaṭāha anēka. 80(b).

I stayed in each of the universes for a hundred-and-one years, and in this way I roamed in many universes which were round in shape like an egg, and everywhere I saw most marvellous sights that defy imagination and description¹. (Doha no.80-b)

[Note—¹In Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 Kaagbhusund says that he roamed around for one hundred and one Kalpas in the different universes. Though it is not clear how many universes Kaagbhusund visited, but it is certain that he spent one hundred and one years in each of them.

Remember: What we are talking about here is not the mortal gross world known to us, but a subtle world transcendental existence where time and space are measured in different units than what we are accustomed to. See the above referred Chaupai herein below for more details.]

चौ०. लोक लोक प्रति भिन्न बिधाता । भिन्न बिष्नु सिव मनु दिसित्राता ॥ १ ॥
नर गंधर्ब भूत बेताला । किंनर निसिचर पसु खग ब्याला ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

lōka lōka prati bhinna bidhātā. bhinna biṣnu siva manu disitrātā. 1.
nara gandharba bhūta bētālā. kinnara nisicara pasu khaga byālā. 2.

Each world or Loka that I visited had its own set life in its various forms and stages of evolution. Every world had a different Creator Brahma, Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Manu (the first male from whom the human generation descended), Dikpals (the guardians or caretakers of the four quarters of the world; kind of semi-gods), human beings, Gandharvas (celestial musicians and decorators of the heaven; a sort of semi-gods), ghosts, phantoms and spirits, Kinnars (celestial dancers and singers in the heavenly court of the gods; they have the head of a horse), demons who roamed in the night, animals, birds and serpents. (1-2)

देव दनुज गन नाना जाती । सकल जीव तहँ आनहि भाँती ॥ ३ ॥
महि सरि सागर सर गिरि नाना । सब प्रपंच तहँ आनइ आना ॥ ४ ॥

dēva danuja gana nānā jāti. sakala jīva taham'ānahi bhām'tī. 3.
mahī sari sāgara sara giri nānā. saba prapañca taham'āna'i ānā. 4.

There were gods and demons of all classes, big and small. In fact, the creatures living in a particular world had their own unique characteristics and qualities that varied from one to another universe. (3)

There were uncountable earths, rivers, oceans, lakes, hills and mountains. It was a wondrous spectacle of stupendous proportions, where variations were so vast and immense that no place or its inhabitants were similar to the other on any count. (4)

अंडकोस प्रति प्रति निज रूपा । देखेउँ जिनस अनेक अनूपा ॥ ५ ॥
अवधपुरी प्रति भुवन निनारी । सरजू भिन्न भिन्न नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

aṇḍakōsa prati prati nija rūpā. dēkhē'um' jīnasa anēka anūpā. 5.
avadhapurī prati bhuvana ninārī. sarajā bhinna bhinna nara nārī. 6.

(The wonder of all wonders was that—) In each of these rounded egg-like universes I saw my own image as if I was present in all of them at the same time! Apart from this, I also saw many unique and beautiful things that completely baffled me. (5)

For instance, in each of the Bhuvans (worlds) that I visited I saw the city of Ayodhya with its river Saryu and male and female citizens, but each city, river and the inhabitants were unique in themselves, and they were different from the ones I saw in other worlds and universes. (6)

दसरथ कौसल्या सुनु ताता । बिबिध रूप भरतादिक भ्राता ॥ ७ ॥
प्रति ब्रह्मांड राम अवतारा । देखेउँ बालबिनोद अपारा ॥ ८ ॥

dasaratha kausalyā sunu tātā. bibidha rūpa bharatādika bhrātā. 7.
prati brahmāṇḍa rāma avatārā. dēkha'um' bālabinōda apārā. 8.

My dear (tātā), listen! Lord Ram's parents, King Dasrath and mother Kaushalya, as well as the Lord's brother Bharat and others too were different in all the Ayodhyas I visited. (7)

Indeed, each universe had its own incarnation of Lord Ram, and in each of them I could see the infinitely charming ways of the Lord as he played around in different ways in the form of a child. [But all these manifestations or visible forms of Lord Ram were the same as clearly mentioned in Doha no. 81-b below.] (8)

दो०. भिन्न भिन्न मैं दीख सबु अति बिचित्र हरिजान ।
अगनित भुवन फिरेउँ प्रभु राम न देखेउँ आन ॥ ८१ (क) ॥

dōhā.

bhinna bhinna maim dīkha sabu ati bicitra harijāna.
aganita bhuvana phirē'um' prabhu rāma na dēkhē'um' āna. 81 (a).

Oh the celestial mount of Lord Hari ("harijāna"—i.e. Garud)! Everything I saw was different from the other and had its own distinctiveness, and in all sooth and without gainsay it was indeed a wondrous spectacle that awed and perplexed me beyond imagination.

But inspite of this astounding diversity and stupendity of variation, one thing stood out remarkably—in all the innumerable universes and worlds where I roamed, I saw only one form of my Lord Sri Ram; there were no changes in him. There was the same form of Lord Ram everywhere though everything else changed around me from one world or universe to another. (Doha no. 81-a)

सोइ सिसुपन सोइ सोभा सोइ कृपाल रघुबीर ।
भुवन भुवन देखत फिरउँ प्रेरित मोह समीर ॥ ८१ (ख) ॥

sō'i sisupana sō'i sōbhā sō'i krpāla raghubīra.
bhuvana bhuvana dēkhata phira'um' prērita mōha samīra. 81 (b).

Impelled by the wind of delusions and inspired by an inquisitive mind that was infatuated with amazement by the sights I saw, I roamed around from one world to another in the countless universes. But to my utter astonishment, I saw the same merciful Lord Ram in the form of a child, having the same bewitching charm and beauty, wherever I went. (Doha no. 81-b)

चौ०. भ्रमत मोहि ब्रह्मांड अनेका । बीते मनहुँ कल्प सत एका ॥ १ ॥
फिरत फिरत निज आश्रम आयउँ । तहँ पुनि रहि कछु काल गवाँयउँ ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

bhramata mōhi brahmāṇḍa anēkā. bītē manahum' kalpa sata ēkā. 1.
phirata phirata nija āśrama āya'um'. taham' puni rahi kachu kāla gavāmya'um'.
2.

It appeared to me that I had spent one hundred and one Kalpas¹ while wondering in the countless Brahmaands or universe (and saw marvellous sights as described herein above). (1)

During these travels I also came back to my own hermitage and spent some time there before resuming my journey.

[To wit, at the end of one round of my journey through a particular world, I came back to my hermitage that existed in that world to abide there for some time and take some rest.]² (2)

[Note—¹Kalpa is a unit of measurement of years. 1 human years = 1 day of the gods; and 1000 years of the gods = 1 Kalpa. At the end of each Kalpa there is dissolution of creation existing at that time in which all the three Lokas, i.e. the heaven, the terrestrial and the nether worlds, come to an end.

Earlier in Doha no. 80-b we have already read that Kaagbhusund stayed for one hundred and one years in each universe. In this way he wandered in countless universes for a total of roughly one hundred and one Kalpas.

²Obviously Kaagbhusund may have seen his own hermitage in each of the worlds he visited. So after getting tired of travelling he may have come to take rest in his hermitage and spend some time there before continuing with his journey of discovery.

The basic idea here is that creation and life in it are a continuous cycle of birth and death, of a beginning and an end, and so the wheel of creation continues to rotate endlessly. Another salient feature of this creation is that it is continuously changing; no two things, individuals and times are alike.

In this state of flux, the only constant entity is the 'Truth', for it remains the same and is unaffected by time and space. And from the perspective of metaphysics, this Truth is called pure 'Consciousness'. It is eternal, imperishable and constant; it predates each cycle of creation and outlives it till the next cycle starts rolling once again.

Since Kaagbhusund had witnessed all these cycles, it is clear that he is not talking about his gross physical body which dies and perishes when its time comes, but he is talking about his ethereal form, his 'true self' which is his Atma or soul, and this Atma itself is pure Consciousness. To wit, Kaagbhusund travelled in the universes in Spirit form, in a disembodied form as the Atma that is free from the limitations of the gross physical body. That is why he did not 'die' and managed to 'live' for such a long duration during these travels.]

निज प्रभु जन्म अवध सुनि पायउँ । निर्भर प्रेम हरषि उठि धायउँ ॥ ३ ॥
देखउँ जन्म महोत्सव जाई । जेहि बिधि प्रथम कहा मैं गाई ॥ ४ ॥

nija prabhu janma avadha suni pāya'um̃. nirbhara prēma haraṣi uṭhi
dhāya'um̃. 3.

dēkha'um̃ janma mahōtsava jāī. jēhi bidhi prathama kahā mair̃ gāī. 4.

While staying there (in my hermitage), whenever I heard¹ that my beloved Lord Ram has taken a birth (in the form of a human being) in Ayodhya, I used to become thrilled and rushed there to meet him. (3)

I would go and witness the birth celebrations of the Lord in the same manner I have already described to you (Garud) now². (4)

[Note—¹From whom did Kaagbhusund hear about the birth of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram? Well, it was from the Gods, such as Brahma and Shiva. When the Lord revealed himself on the earth, there were celebrations in heaven where the celestial musicians, dancere and singers danced and played musical instruments. This is clearly hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 191 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

²To wit, in all the worlds Kaagbhusund roamed during his journey through the different universes, he had witnessed the birth celebrations of Lord Ram in the same way as he has experienced it in his present life about which he is currently telling Garud.]

राम उदर देखेउँ जग नाना । देखत बनइ न जाइ बखाना ॥ ५ ॥
तहँ पुनि देखेउँ राम सुजाना । माया पति कृपाल भगवाना ॥ ६ ॥

rāma udara dēkhē'um̐ jaga nānā. dēkhata bana'i na jā'i bakhānā. 5.
tahaṁ puni dēkhē'um̐ rāma sujānā. māyā pati kṛpāla bhagavānā. 6.

[Coming back to the point from where Kaagbhusund had started his narration about his marvellous experiences as soon as he flew into the mouth of Lord Ram as mentioned in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80 herein above, he told Garud—]

In this fantastic and unbelievable way, I saw innumerable universes that defy description and were beyond imagination in the abdomen of Lord Ram. (5)

Everywhere and in each of the worlds that I visited, I again and again saw the same merciful and gracious form of Lord Sri Ram who is the wise and enlightened Lord of Maya (delusions)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 81-a, which reiterates the same point.]

करउँ बिचार बहोरि बहोरी । मोह कलिल व्यापित मति मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
उभय घरी महुँ मैं सब देखा । भयउँ भ्रमित मन मोह बिसेषा ॥ ८ ॥

kara'um̐ bicāra bahōri bahōrī. mōha kalila byāpita mati mōrī. 7.
ubhaya gharī maham̐ mair̐ saba dēkhā. bhaya'um̐ bhramita mana mōha bisēṣā. 8.

But this experience had completely baffled me; I was overcome with bewilderment and confusion. I pondered over repeatedly about what I had witnessed, but it defied my comprehension because Moha (delusions and imaginary visions) had cast a dark mist over my mind and intellect¹. (7)

The wonder of wonders is that all this was seen, witnessed or experienced by me in a very short period of time (which was literally equivalent to “two Gharis”)². This caused a lot of bewilderment for me, and I was extremely amazed at what I had witnessed. (8)

[Note—¹What does Kaagbhusund mean here? He means that though he is a self-realised, enlightened and wise soul who is blessed with knowledge of the Truth and

therefore knows very well the truth of Lord Ram and creation, still he could not understand the underlying essence of the sights he saw. He was so amazed and dazed by the miraculous spectacles he saw that for once he forgot that the world is ever-changeable, and the only entity that remains constant is pure cosmic Consciousness that is represented by Lord Ram known as the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma, as well as his own 'true self' known as his Atma. This Atma is a sublime, ethereal and subtle entity that is different and separate from the rest of the gross perishable world. This is what Kaagbhusund means that delusions had overcome him.

²Kaagbhusund had the miraculous experience of wondering for hundreds and thousands of years in countless universes that actually lasted only for a while in physical terms. This is the magical affect of Maya or delusions. The affected person has such hallucinating experiences that would defy all explanations from a practical point of view, but the person concerned believes that what he had witnessed was actually true.

2 ½ Hours = 1 Ghari. This means '2 Gharis' is equivalent to 48 minutes. This measurement of time is for technical reasons, but in practice the term 'two Gharis' is used to mean a very short duration of time, or some quick development.

Kaagbhusund was so deluded that he had thought that a long time equivalent to 101 Kalpas had passed while he travelled in the many universes while actually it was only a brief period of some minutes.

Remember: Kaagbhusund was having this fantastic vision while his eyes were closed—refer Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 80 herein above. It is therefore absolutely clear that he was merely kind of 'day-dreaming'.]

दो०. देखि कृपाल बिकल मोहि बिहँसे तब रघुबीर ।
बिहँसतहीं मुख बाहेर आयउँ सुनु मतिधीर ॥ ८२ (क) ॥
dōhā.

dēkhi kṛpāla bikala mōhi bihamśē taba raghubīra.
bihamśatahīm mukha bāhēra āya'um̐ sunu matidhīra. 82 (a).

When the merciful Lord saw my perplexed expressions and the way I was feeling restless by the visions I had, he laughed once again.

Oh the one who has a steady and resolute mind ("matidhīra"—i.e. Garud)! As soon as the Lord opened his mouth to laugh, I immediately came out of his belly. (Doha no. 82-a)

सोइ लरिकाई मो सन करन लगे पुनि राम ।
कोटि भाँति समुझावउँ मनु न लहइ बिश्राम ॥ ८२ (ख) ॥

sō'i larikā'ī mō sana karana lagē puni rāma.
kōṭi bhām̐ti samujhāva'um̐ manu na laha'i biśrāma. 82 (b).

Immediately thereafter, Lord Ram resumed his childish pranks with me (as if nothing at all had happened).

Even though I tried in millions of ways to calm down my mind and reason with it, but it refused to be at peace. (82-b)

चौ०. देखि चरित यह सो प्रभुताई । समुझत देह दसा बिसराई ॥ १ ॥
 धरनि परेउँ मुख आव न बाता । त्राहि त्राहि आरत जन त्राता ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

dēkhi carita yaha sō prabhutā'ī. samujhata dēha dasā bisarā'ī. 1.
 dharani parē'um mukha āva na bātā. trāhi trāhi ārata jana trātā. 2.

Observing the Lord's childish activities on the one hand, and the Lord's cosmic play that I witnessed in his belly a while ago, I was awe-struck and flummoxed beyond imagination, and lost awareness of my body (i.e. I became absolutely dumb and stunned because I could not reconcile the two forms of the Lord)¹.

[¹To wit, I failed to realise that the 'child' I am seeing playing before me was not an ordinary human child, but he was the Supreme Being himself in that form. In this connection it is said in Ram Charit Manas that those who are wise and enlightened abandon all sorts of doubtings and confusions regarding Lord Ram, and instead worship and honour the Lord with a dedicated mind. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 115; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 83; and (iii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 90.] (1)

So in my consternation and anxiety, I fell to the ground, pleading to the merciful Lord to protect me. I cried, 'Oh Lord who is a protector of his devotees and who removes their distress (ārata jana trātā)! Please save me from the utter distress I am in.' No other word came out of my mouth, so utterly confounded was I. (2)

प्रेमाकुल प्रभु मोहि बिलोकी । निज माया प्रभुता तब रोकी ॥ ३ ॥
 कर सरोज प्रभु मम सिर धरेऊ । दीनदयाल सकल दुख हरेऊ ॥ ४ ॥

prēmākula prabhu mōhi bilōkī. nija māyā prabhutā taba rōkī. 3.
 kara sarōja prabhu mama sira dharē'ū. dīnadayāla sakala dukha harē'ū. 4.

Thereafter, when the Lord observed that I am very restless and overcome with affection for him, he stopped his Maya (delusions and confusions) from having its overpowering influence upon me.

[To wit, when the "Lord of Maya" found me in distress and tormented by the effects of Maya, he showed his merciful nature by checking Maya and instructing it not to disturb me any further.] (3)

Even as he stopped Maya, he put his lotus-like palm (of his hand) on my head and immediately eliminated all distress and misery that had been tormenting me¹. (4)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that Maya has a natural tendency to prey and pounce upon one and all, and it stops disturbing a creature only when the Lord orders it to do so. Even the greatest of sages and wise-ones were overcome by the affects of Maya.

Even the Lord himself is surprised at the power that Maya wields over the world. These facts are mentioned in the context of sage Narad getting deluded under the influence of Maya though he was a wise and celestial sage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 132; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 133; and (iii) line no. 2 of Doha no. 137 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

कीन्ह राम मोहि बिगत बिमोहा । सेवक सुखद कृपा संदोहा ॥ ५ ॥
प्रभुता प्रथम बिचारि बिचारी । मन महँ होइ हरष अति भारी ॥ ६ ॥

kīnha rāma mōhi bigata bimōhā. sēvaka sukhada kṛpā sandōhā. 5.
prabhutā prathama bicāri bicārī. mana maham̐ hō'i haraṣa ati bhārī. 6.

The merciful Lord who bestows happiness and joy upon his devotees and followers made me completely free from delusions and confusions along with their accompanying mental agitations. (5)

When I recollected the visions I had that showed the supreme Authority of the Lord and his cosmic Powers that I had witnessed just a while ago, I rejoiced at the thought and felt extremely exhilarated and ecstatic¹. (6)

[¹Note the difference: just a while ago Kaagbhusund was restless by recollecting the visions he saw, and now when the Lord freed him of delusions he is rejoicing by remembering the same sights!]

भगत बछलता प्रभु कै देखी । उपजी मम उर प्रीति बिसेषी ॥ ७ ॥
सजल नयन पुलकित कर जोरी । कीन्हिउँ बहु बिधि बिनय बहोरी ॥ ८ ॥

bhagata bachalatā prabhu kai dēkhī. upajī mama ura prīti bisēṣī. 7.
sajala nayana pulakita kara jōrī. kīnhi'um̐ bahu bidhi binaya bahōrī. 8.

Observing the way the Lord showed his grace, mercy and affection for his devotees, especially immense devotion and love for the Lord sprouted in my heart.

[To wit, I already had a lot of affection and devotion for the Lord in my heart because this was the primary reason I had gone from my hermitage to visit him and stay with him for some time at Ayodhya. But when I personally experienced how the Lord loves his devotees—especially when he put his hands on my head to bless and caress me fondly, I felt a surge of warm feelings for Lord Ram overwhelming my inner-self; I felt extremely thrilled and exhilarated in my heart, and my whole body had goose bumps.] (7)

Then, with tears in my eyes and a thrilled body, I joined my palms and prayed to the Lord in various ways. (8)

दो०. सुनि सप्रेम मम बानी देखि दीन निज दास ।

बचन सुखद गंभीर मृदु बोले रमानिवास ॥ ८३(क) ॥

dōhā.

sunī saprēma mama bānī dēkhi dīna nija dāsa.
bacana sukhada gambhīra mṛdu bōlē ramānivāsa. 83(a).

When the Lord of Laxmi (“ramānivāsa”—i.e. Lord Vishnu who had manifested in the visible form of Lord Ram) heard my affectionate prayers and found that I am his humble devotee and servant, he spoke with a pleasant voice that gave joy and happiness to me, but his words had profound meaning. He said— (Doha no. 83-a)

काकभसुंडि मागु बर अति प्रसन्न मोहि जानि ।

अनिमादिक सिद्धि अपर रिधि मोच्छ सकल सुख खानि ॥ ८३(ख) ॥

kākabhasuṇḍi māgu bara ati prasanna mōhi jāni.
animādika sidhi apara ridhi mōccha sakala sukha khāni. 83(b).

The Lord said, ‘Oh Kaagbhusund! Ask for any boon of your choice, knowing that I am very pleased with you. Ask me for anything—such as the various mystical powers known as ‘Siddhis’ like ‘Anima’ etc.¹, or wealth, material well-being and achievements known as ‘Riddhis’, or ‘Moksha’ (meaning salvation and emancipation; oneness with the Supreme Soul; freedom from the cycle of birth and death) which is a mine of all happiness, joy, bliss and beatitude.’ (Doha no. 83-b)

[¹Note— The *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no. 16 refers to *nine Siddhis*. They are the following—(i) ‘Anima’ ‘अणिमा’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; to become small like an atom; (ii) ‘Mahima’ ‘महिमा’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, wisdom, erudition, knowledge and skills; to become huge like a mountain, thereby standing out and being unique or special in a crowd; (iii) ‘Garima’ ‘गरिमा’ is to be heavy-weight in any field, to have special qualities that give one’s ideas and words a great amount of importance and weight; to have stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance; (iv) ‘Laghima’ ‘लघिमा’ is the grand virtue of being simple and humble inspite of being great, powerful and authoritative; it is to have simplicity and humility despite possessing grandeur, majesty, power, authority and magnificence; (v) ‘Praapti’ ‘प्राप्ति’ is to be able to attain, gain or obtain anything wished or desired for; (vi) ‘Praakramya’ ‘प्राक्रम्य’ is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ ‘ईश्वत्व’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over everything else; to be able to rule over others; (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ ‘वशित्व’ is to be able to control and subdue others, and exert influence on them so much so that they become obedient and subservient; and (ix) ‘Praakaashya’ ‘प्राकाश्य’ is to be able to assume any form one wishes.

Sometimes, Paraakramya is replaced by ‘Praakaamya’ ‘प्राकाम्य’ which means irresistible will. But they imply the same thing because one obtains victory and glory only when one has an irresistible desire to attain it.

According to some versions, ‘Mukti’, or to obtain liberation and deliverance from all sorts of bondages and fetters, is also regarded as one of the Siddhis. It is closely related to ‘Moksha’ meaning final spiritual emancipation and deliverance of the aspirant.

According to some other accounts, ‘Bhukti’—i.e. the ability to enjoy whatever one wishes to acquire and enjoy, is also one of the nine Siddhis.]

चौ०. ग्यान बिबेक बिरति बिग्याना । मुनि दुर्लभ गुन जे जग नाना ॥ १ ॥
आजु देउं सब संसय नाहीं । मागु जो तोहि भाव मन माहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gyāna bibēka birati bigyānā. muni durlabha guna jē jaga nānā. 1.
āju dē'um̐ saba sansaya nāhīm. māgu jō tōhi bhāva mana māhīm. 2.

[Lord Ram continued—] ‘The virtues of enlightenment and spiritual wisdom, of the ability for critical judgement and discrimination between the false and truth, of renunciation, dispassion and detachment, of true knowledge and analytical abilities, and all other eclectic spiritual virtues and metaphysical knowledge in this world¹ that are difficult even for the exalted sages and seers to access --- [1]

--- Verily indeed and without any doubt, I shall grant all of them to you today. Ask what you wish for (and it would be granted immediately to you by me)² [2].’ (1-2)

[Note—¹The ‘Gyan’, ‘Vigyan’, ‘Vivek’ and other virtues referred to here pertain to knowledge of the true nature of the ‘self’ and the ‘Atma’, about the universal truths that govern this creation, about the essential elements that constitute the creation, about the all-pervading, sublime and eternal nature of the pure Consciousness that is the only reality in this creation and represents the true ‘self’ of the individual living being at the micro level of existence as well as of the Supreme Being at the macro level of the cosmos.

Taken all-in-all, these terms essentially refer to the spiritual aspects of metaphysical knowledge.

²There are other instances in Ram Charit Manas also where Lord Ram was willing to grant the wishes of his devotee. For instance, (i) in Baal Kand, Doha no. 148 where Lord Vishnu had told Manu and his wife Satrupa, who had been doing severe Tapa or penance, to seek any boon they wanted and the Lord would grant it to them instantly; and (ii) in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 23 that precedes Doha no. 11 where Lord Ram told sage Sutikshan that he may ask for any boon that he wished to have and it shall be fulfilled.]

सुनि प्रभु बचन अधिक अनुरागेउं । मन अनुमान करन तब लागेउं ॥ ३ ॥
प्रभु कह देन सकल सुख सही । भगति आपनी देन न कही ॥ ४ ॥

sunī prabhu bacana adhika anurāgē'um̐. mana anumāna karana taba lāgē'um̐.
3.

prabhu kaha dēna sakala sukha sahī. bhagati āpanī dēna na kahī. 4.

Hearing the Lord's words, my affection and love for him grew manifold and I was overwhelmed by this emotion. I began to ponder in my mind as follows: — (3)

‘It is alright that the gracious Lord has told me that he is willing to bless me with all types of boons that would give me happiness and joy, but he has not said that he would grant his ‘Bhakti’ or the virtue of devotion to me. (4)

भगति हीन गुन सब सुख ऐसे । लवन बिना बहु बिंजन जैसे ॥ ५ ॥
भजन हीन सुख कवने काजा । अस बिचारि बोलेउँ खगराजा ॥ ६ ॥

bhagati hīna guna saba sukha aisē. lavana binā bahu binjāna jaisē. 5.
bhajana hīna sukha kavanē kājā. asa bicāri bōlē'um' khagarājā. 6.

Without Bhakti (devotion for the Lord God) all other virtues and qualities are like food that has no salt in it. To wit, just like food tastes bland and insipid without salt, all other virtues and blessings that the Lord may grant to me are worthless and futile and not worth any effort if he does not bless me with the grandest virtue of having Bhakti for him. (5)

What is the use of, and what purpose will be served by having all sorts of joys and happiness in life in this world if one has no devotion for the Lord in one's heart, if one's mind is not devoted to worshipping, honouring and remembering Lord Ram¹.

Thinking thus, oh the king of birds (Garud), I replied to the Lord --- (6)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 95—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 96 where Kaagbhusund has told Garud that he loves his body of a ‘crow’ as it is in this body that he had been blessed with Bhakti for Lord Ram.

The importance of Bhakti has been stressed by Kaagbhusund elsewhere also during his conversation with Garud which is in the form of a spiritual discourse. For instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 119; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-19 that precede Doha no. 122.]

जौं प्रभु होइ प्रसन्न बर देहू । मो पर करहु कृपा अरु नेहू ॥ ७ ॥
मन भावत बर मागउँ स्वामी । तुम्ह उदार उर अंतरजामी ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ prabhu hō'i prasanna bara dēhū. mō para karahu kṛpā aru nēhū. 7.
mana bhāvata bara māga'um' svāmī. tumha udāra ura antarajāmī. 8.

‘Oh Lord, if you are so pleased with me that you are ready to grant any boon to me that I would like to have, and if you do have so much affection and mercy for me that you would willingly fulfil my wish, --- (7)

--- Then I shall ask you for something that I would really like to have, something that I truly am fond of and yearn for. Oh Lord, you are a most magnanimous and gracious giver of all, and being all-knowing you are also aware of my inner thoughts.

[To wit oh Lord, since you are “*antarajāmī*”, i.e. one who lives in the inner-self of all living beings, and therefore is aware of all thoughts, notions, feeling, sentiments and emotions of the creature, there is nothing hidden from you. You will immediately know whether what I am about to seek from you now is indeed my true wish and coming out straight from the inner core of my heart, or if it is just a pretension on my part to look nice and good to you in my cunning attempt to please you and seek something more valuable and better from you by way of a boon.] (8)

दो०. अबिरल भगति बिसुद्ध तव श्रुति पुरान जो गाव ।

जेहि खोजत जोगीस मुनि प्रभु प्रसाद कोउ पाव ॥ ८४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

abirala bhagati bisud'dha tava śruti purāna jō gāva.
jēhi khōjata jōgīsa muni prabhu prasāda kō'u pāva. 84 (a).

That undiluted and prisine pure form of Bhakti (devotion) of yours which is steady and uninterrupted, and about which the Vedas and Purans have always sung (i.e. have espoused, honoured and lauded)¹, that Bhakti which is searched for by so many exalted and acclaimed sages, ascetics and hermits but only a few amongst them, upon whom you are gracious and pleased, are able to access --- (Doha no. 84-a)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45 where Lord Ram has himself asserted that the eternal importance and value of Bhakti has been praised and sung by the Vedas and the Purans, i.e. by the ancient scriptures.]

भगत कल्पतरु प्रनत हित कृपा सिंधु सुख धाम ।

सोइ निज भगति मोहि प्रभु देहु दया करि राम ॥ ८४ (ख) ॥

bhagata kalpataru pranata hita kṛpā sindhu sukha dhāma.
sō'i nija bhagati mōhi prabhu dēhu dayā kari rāma. 84 (b).

Oh gracious and merciful Lord Ram who is like the Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree of the gods) for his devotees (*bhagata kalpataru*), who is the benevolent well-wisher of those who surrender before you and take refuge and shelter in your holy feet (*pranata hita*), who is like an ocean of mercy, grace, compassion and kindness (*kṛpā sindhu*), and who is an embodiment of eternal bliss and happiness (*sukha dhāma*)—please be kind and merciful enough to grant me that ‘Bhakti’ of yours.’

[To wit, oh Lord, I don’t want anything. I am contented to be near you and have the privilege of playing with you like I was a close and dear friend of yours. The fact that you have acknowledged my love for you and reciprocated it with your own love for me is sufficient enough of a reward for me. You have blessed me by placing your hands on my head; you have shown me your cosmic form that rarely any living

being has ever seen or would ever see. You have given me free access to you. Them, to cap them all, you are ready to grant anything I wish. What more would I want?

But in case you insist that you do want to give me some kind of gift, then give me something of real value that I would cherish for life, and it is the boon of having undiluted and eternal devotion for you. The other things you mentioned can be granted by other gods if I cared for any of them, but ‘Bhakti for Lord Ram’ is something so exclusive that it can be granted only by Lord Ram himself and no one else!

Therefore, if you really want to give me some gift, give me your Bhakti; otherwise I am happy, and ‘Thank Thee indeed’!] (Doha no. 84-b)

चौ०. एवमस्तु कहि रघुकुलनायक । बोले बचन परम सुखदायक ॥ १ ॥

सुनु बायस तैं सहज सयाना । काहे न मागसि अस बरदाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēvamastu kahi raghukulanāyaka. bōlē bacana parama sukhadāyaka. 1.
sunu bāyasa taiṁ sahaja sayānā. kāhē na māgasi asa baradānā. 2.

Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghu’s line of kings of Ayodhya (raghukulanāyaka) gave his consent by saying “ēvamastu”, i.e. ‘so be it; it shall be as you desire’. Saying this, the Lord spoke words that were supremely pleasant and gave joy to Kaagbhusund. (1)

The Lord said, ‘Oh Crow (bāyasa); listen! You are very wise and intelligent; why then would you have not sought this blessing or blessing from me? [You could have opted for many other things, but you were wise to select Bhakti instead. Surely this proves you are wiser than most of others whom I have ever approached for fulfilling their wishes.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹Only a person who is exceptionally intelligent and wise would use the given opportunity most meaningfully. The Lord had offered so many boons to Kaagbhusund but the latter realised that they are all useless if he is not granted Bhakti. This is because Kaagbhusund knew that the quality of Bhakti is very dear to Lord Ram, and so he reasoned that by having Bhakti he would also endear himself to the Lord in a subtle way. And by the Lord’s own admission, Kaagbhusund succeeded in his plan.

In fact, Lord Ram had himself praised Bhakti when he went to Sabari’s hermitage during his forest sojourn. He had clearly told her that since she had it she was very dear to him. To prove this point, the Lord had performed her last rites as if he was her son. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.

Another instance similar to that of Kaagbhusund seeking the boon of Bhakti from Lord Ram is found when the seven celestial sages known as Sankadi had gone to pray and offer their obeisance to Lord Ram; they had also asked for the grant of Bhakti. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35. Sankadi sages have also praised Bhakti while asking for this blessing.]

सब सुख खानि भगति तैं मागी । नहिं जग कोउ तोहि सम बड़भागी ॥ ३ ॥
जो मुनि कोटि जतन नहिं लहहीं । जे जप जोग अनल तन दहहीं ॥ ४ ॥

saba sukha khāni bhagati tair̥ māgī. nahir̥ jaga kō'u tōhi sama barābhāgī. 3.
jō muni kōṭi jatana nahir̥ lahaḥir̥. jē japa jōga anala tana dahahir̥. 4.

You have asked for the boon of having ‘Bhakti’ (devotion for Lord God) which is indeed a fountain or a mine of all sorts of bliss and happiness in life. Really, there is no one as lucky and fortunate (as well as wise) as you are¹. (3)

Bhakti is a boon that not even great sages and hermits usually get even after doing a lot of strenuous religious efforts such as doing constant Japa (i.e. repetition of the holy name of the Lord by restraining the mind from any other thought, something that is very difficult to practice), Yoga (meditation along with reflection and contemplation), and enduring other physical discomforts such as letting the body suffer by subjecting it to the heat of a raging fire during fire sacrifices or doing a form of Yoga known as Hata Yoga. (4)

[Note—¹People seek all sorts of worldly boons and temporal gifts if they are given a chance to ask for one. Some ask for wealth, some seek fame and powers, some want a son and prosperous family, and others want good health, success in endeavours, and so on. Some amongst them who are enlightened may ask for Mukti or Moksha, i.e. for liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. But Mukti or Moksha comes only when one dies, and there may be many a sacrifices, meritorious deeds or strenuous efforts that one would have to make to achieve this noble goal while one is alive.

Not even great sages and hermits get this blessing even though they suffer so much to acquire spiritual merit. They are like an adult son for me, and like a mother is not too worried about her grown-up children as they are able to take care of themselves, I too am not unduly worried about the spiritual welfare of great sages, seers, hermits and ascetics because I know that their future is secure, that they would certainly get liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation based on the strength of their great sacrifices, penances, austerities, religious practices and spiritually meritorious deeds. But in case of those who seek Bhakti, I become especially concerned as they are like my infant children.

There are innumerable instances in Ram Charit Manas where the importance and significance of Bhakti has been highlighted. Some of instances are the following: (a) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 84; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79; (iv) Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 7, 12-14 that precede it; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 119; and (b) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43.

It is rare that anyone would seek the virtue of ‘Bhakti’ or devotion for me inspite of my declaration that Bhakti is very dear to me—see the next Chaupai no. 5 herein below. The blessing of Bhakti helps the person to lead a high quality of life in this world that is marked by spiritual bliss, happiness and carefreeness even while he goes about the routine affairs of life in an ordinary way like his other peers because once he has Bhakti in him his welfare and good become my concern—for I treat a person who has Bhakti as a mother treats her child. I personally feel obliged to take care of all his needs and free him of all worries. He need not exert himself in making

special efforts to lead an auspicious life or do meritorious deeds or perform strenuous religious rites in order to gain spiritual merit, for all spiritual rewards come to him automatically and without any discomfort.

Therefore, apart from living a happy, blissful and carefree life, a person who has Bhakti in him is assured of Mukti or Moksha at the time of his death. So he has the best of both the worlds—he enjoys a peaceful and happy life while he is alive, and at the same time he is assured of emancipation and salvation upon death. And both these rewards come to him without effort and worries.]

रीझेऊँ देखि तोरि चतुराई । मागेहु भगति मोहि अति भाई ॥ ५ ॥
सुनु बिहंग प्रसाद अब मोरें । सब सुभ गुन बसिहहि उर तोरें ॥ ६ ॥

rījhe'um' dēkhi tōri caturā'ī. māgēhu bhagati mōhi ati bhā'ī. 5.
sunu bihaṅga prasāda aba mōrēm. saba subha guna basihahim ura tōrēm. 6.

I am truly pleased and enchanted by your sagacity and wisdom in that you have selected Bhakti as your blessing-of-choice, for Bhakti is also dear to me. [To wit, by asking for the blessing of Bhakti you have indirectly endeared yourself to me because Bhakti is liked by me as well. So by saying you would love to have Bhakti you have created a bond that is common between the two of us for I love Bhakti too. And this is why I am so amazed at your wisdom and cleverness for you have chosen something that would establish an eternal bond of love and affection between you and me.] (5)

Listen oh Bird (sunu bihaṅga)! By my blessings and grace, all the auspicious and noble qualities that exist in this world would now onwards reside in your heart. (6)

भगति ग्यान बिग्यान बिरागा । जोग चरित्र रहस्य बिभागा ॥ ७ ॥
जानब तैं सबही कर भेदा । मम प्रसाद नहिं साधन खेदा ॥ ८ ॥

bhagati gyāna bigyāna birāgā. jōga caritra rahasya bibhāgā. 7.
jānaba taim sabahī kara bhēdā. mama prasāda nahim sādhana khēdā. 8.

Bhakti (devotion), Gyan (spiritual wisdom and enlightenment), Vigyan (realisation of the self and cosmic Consciousness), Vairagya (true renunciation, dispassion, detachment etc.), Yoga (meditation), and the many secret aspects of my divine stories and forms with all their different connotations, --- (7)

--- The esoteric knowledge of all will be known to you easily. By my grace and blessings, you will not have to endure any hardship or encounter any sort of difficulty in understanding these profound secrets¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 114 where sage Lomus has blessed Kaagbhusund in a similar manner.]

दो०. माया संभव भ्रम सब अब न व्यापिहहिं तोहि ।
जानेसु ब्रह्म अनादि अज अगुन गुनाकर मोहि ॥ ८५ (क) ॥

dōhā.

māyā sambhava bhrama saba aba na byāpihahim tōhi.
jānēsu brahma anādi aja aguna gunākara mōhi. 85 (a).

Any kind of perplexity, doubt and confusion that owe their origin to Maya (delusions) would no longer affect you. [To wit, you will be free from their tainting and demeaning influences.]

Henceforth, realise that I (Lord Ram) is a personified form of the supreme Brahm who has no beginning, who is without a birth, and who has no attributes like other living beings, but at the same time who is a treasury of all the best of auspicious virtues that exist in this creation¹. (Doha no. 85-a)

[Note—¹It would seem, on the face of it, that it's like self-praise on the part of Lord Ram to call himself 'Brahm' and the 'Supreme Being'. Well, it is not that at all, as the Lord is merely reiterating what others, who themselves are knowledgeable, wise and enlightened, have said about the Lord.

Let us refer to some of these wise ones who have affirmed that Lord Ram is indeed the Supreme Being or Brahm himself. (i) Lord Shiva has told this fact to his consort Parvati in no uncertain terms, mincing no words to assert it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (ii) The creator Brahma had told his son sage Vasistha the same thing—refer: Ram Charit Mans, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iii) Sage Kaagbhusund told Garud this fact to remove all his doubts which had vexed him for long—refer: Ram Charit Mans, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 73.

When Lord Ram returned victorious to Ayodhya after the campaign of Lanka and the term of fourteen years of forest dwelling ended, he was crowned the King of the realm. At that time all the senior Gods had come to pay their obeisance and offer their tributes to him. These Gods included Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder, both of whom are the senior-most Gods as they are the two Gods of the Trinity, the third being Lord Vishnu himself who was present in the form of Lord Ram, as well as Indra who is the King of Gods. Then the Vedas, the primary scriptures, had also come in a personified form to pay their respects and pray to Lord Ram. These Gods and the Vedas would not have come to bow their heads and offer their respects to an ordinary human king or emperor no matter how powerful and renowned he may have been. Obviously therefore, the 'King' to whom they had come to pay their respects was clearly not a human being by any count. To wit, Lord Ram was the Lord whom all the Gods and the Vedas praise and are junior to. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 14.

There are numerous other instances as well in the Book "Ram Charit Manas" where this irrefutable fact is stressed. For instance, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 50; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 126 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it; (iii) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 26 to cite a few.]

मोहि भगत प्रिय संतत अस बिचारि सुनु काग ।

कायँ बचन मन मम पद करेसु अचल अनुराग ॥ ८५ (ख) ॥

mōhi bhagata priya santata asa bicāri sunu kāga.
kāyam^ṁ bacana mana mama pada karēsu acala anurāga. 85 (b).

Oh Crow, listen (sunu kāga)! Keep in mind that devotees are very dear to my heart, and with this understanding have eternal devotion and affection for my holy feet through your thoughts, words and deeds¹. (Doha no. 85-b)

[Note—¹Lord Ram advised Kaagbhusund: “My dear, always keep in mind two things: one, that I am the Supreme Being, and two, that I have special place for devotees in my heart. So firstly, never let doubts about my divinity and authenticity ever enter your mind as this would cause a lot of trouble for you and would also pull you down from the state of spiritual blessedness in which you find yourself at present. Secondly, have unflinching devotion for me in all your thoughts, in your words, in your actions—because this would ensure that you remain dear to me, and then taking care of you would be my responsibility.”

Later on Kaagbhusund was similarly blessed by sage Lomus as well as Lord Shiva. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 113-a where Lomus has blessed him; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 109 where Lord Shiva has blessed him.

Refer also to Tulsidas’ book “Vairagya Sandipani”, verse no. 36 where an exact similar idea is stressed.]

चौ०. अब सुनु परम बिमल मम बानी । सत्य सुगम निगमादि बखानी ॥ १ ॥

निज सिद्धांत सुनावउँ तोही । सुनु मन धरु सब तजि भजु मोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aba sunu parama bimala mama bānī. satya sugama nigamādi bakhānī. 1.
nija sid'dhānta sunāva'um^ṁ tōhī. sunu mana dharu saba taji bhaju mōhī. 2.

Lord Ram said to sage Kaagbhusund—‘Now, listen to my sacred (holy and divine) words or teachings which are truthful, easy to understand, and are in consonance with and echoing the eclectic principles laid out in the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas, the Purans etc. (‘nigamādi’)¹. (1)

I shall tell you the fundamental principles as concluded by me (i.e. as deduced, determined and decided by me, the Supreme Being who has created these scriptures, and therefore what I say is the final word on the essential meaning of the teachings of the scriptures).

Listen carefully and enshrine them in your heart and mind. Discard everything else, and worship me, have unwavering devotion for me, be dedicated to me, and inculcate faith and love for me (as a sure-shot means for your spiritual well-being, welfare and good)². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and hence his words can’t be anything other than holy, divine, sacred and truthful.

The scriptures are very voluminous, complicated and labyrinthine; highly erudite and learned sages and seers have spent their entire lifetimes trying to read them fully, understand them and decipher their teachings. They are thus beyond the means and reach and understanding and practical use for the ordinary creature. This problem was realised by the Supreme Lord, so he decided to make them easy to understand for the common person and present their essential teachings in simple and straightforward language.

²To wit, always remember what I tell you now. Imprint my sacred words firmly and indelibly in your sub-conscious. Make a firm resolution that they will invariably act as your moral guide, advisor and teacher in all the decisions your mind and heart make while dealing with all imaginable and all the variable aspects of life. If you follow me closely and implement my teachings, you will not have to look any further for spiritual and moral guidance and advice.]

मम माया संभव संसारा । जीव चराचर बिबिधि प्रकारा ॥ ३ ॥

सब मम प्रिय सब मम उपजाए । सब ते अधिक मनुज मोहि भाए ॥ ४ ॥

mama māyā sambhava sansārā. jīva carācara bibidhi prakārā. 3.
saba mama priya saba mama upajā'ē. saba tē adhika manuja mōhi bhā'ē. 4.

This creation is the result of my Maya (delusion creating powers). This creation has countless varieties of Jivas (living beings), such as those that are mobile ('Char') and those that are immobile ('Achar')¹. (3)

All of them are equally dear to me, and all of them have been created by me (or born out of me as my image). But out of all of them, those who are born as human beings are comparatively dearer to me². (4)

[Note—¹This creation is created by the supreme Brahm using his delusion-creating powers. For this purpose, Brahm has employed three basic Gunas or qualities in creation—the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna. Hence, this Maya is also known as 'Trigunmai Maya' or a Maya that has three-components. This esoteric concept has been explained in a note that accompanies Doha no. 41 of Uttar Kand above.

The living world has both types of living beings—those who can move, for instance the members of the animal kingdom who are studied under the zoological stream in modern science, and those who can't move, such as the members of the plant kingdom who are studied under the botanical stream.

²This idea has been reiterated elsewhere by Lord Ram—viz. Ram Charit Manas: (i) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43 when the Lord had taught the citizens of Ayodhya he has said exactly the same thing. (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 87 where Lord Ram reasserts this fact to sage Kaagbhusund as stated in the present line.

Why so? This question has been answered by Kaagbhusund himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 121. He tells Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu who had come seeking knowledge to the saint)

that—“There is no other form (body) that is as good and desirable as the body of the human being. All the creatures of this world consisting of inanimate as well as animate things yearn to acquire it. The human body is the stepping stone to attain both the heaven as well as the hell. It is also the mean by which a creature can hope to find his final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration in this world. It also grants Gyan, Vairagya and Bhakti. {That is, the Jiva can obtain these three fruits of truthful spiritual knowledge as enshrined in the scriptures, practice the eclectic virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, as well as devotion, dedication and submission for the Lord God through the medium of the human body.} If a Jiva is stupid enough not to properly use this golden opportunity to worship the Supreme Being and have devotion for the Lord to ensure their secure destiny and spiritual well-being then they are like the idiot who throws as precious gem to grab a worthless piece of glass.”

Lord Ram has told Hanuman that though he is neutral towards all in this creation, but still he has a soft corner for his devotees—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 4.]

तिन्ह महँ द्विज द्विज महँ श्रुतिधारी । तिन्ह महँ निगम धरम अनुसारी ॥ ५ ॥
तिन्ह महँ प्रिय बिरक्त पुनि ग्यानी । ग्यानिहु ते अति प्रिय बिग्यानी ॥ ६ ॥

tinha maham' dvija dvija maham' śrutidhārī. tinha mahum' nigama dharama anusārī. 5.

tinha maham' priya birakta puni gyānī. gyānihu tē ati priya bigyānī. 6.

{All humans are not the same; some are naturally good and righteous, while others are vile and sinful. So the Lord obviously does not mean that he loves even sinners and vile persons simply because they are ‘humans’. Its nonsense and incredulous to believe it to be so! So he clarifies his position and elaborates further—}

Amongst the humans, I favour and hold dear the Dwijis (Brahmins). Even amongst them I favour and hold dear those who are expert in the knowledge of the Vedas.

Out of them, those who practice the teaching of these sacred scriptures in their own lives, those who lead a life according to the tenets of Dharma (principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, morality, spirituality etc. as universally taught by all the scriptures), are more favoured by me and dearer to me¹.

[¹To wit, though all elderly and learned Brahmins are favoured by me, but I prefer those who have an in-depth understanding of the essential meaning and teaching of the scriptures, who implement these teachings in their own lives, who are competent and selfless enough to show the rest of the society the path of Dharma by teaching others their essence in a simple language, and in general act as torch-bearers of the sacred knowledge enshrined in the scriptures. I do not mean that I prefer any Brahmin because he is born in that race. Learning the scriptures does not mean memorizing them by rote-learning because it this sort of learning is as good as not knowing the scriptures at all. When I mean by saying ‘I respect and honour Brahmins’ I mean those amongst the Brahmins who are wise, learned and self-realised, those who exercise exemplary self-control over their sense organs, thoughts and words, those who practice in their personal lives what they preach or teach others about the

scriptures, those who are sincere, honest, truthful and trustworthy, and those whose lives are worthy of emulation.] (5)

Out of them (i.e. those who have studied the scriptures and have an in-depth knowledge of their meaning), I prefer those who are ‘Virakta’—i.e. those who have developed the eclectic spiritual virtue of ‘Vairagya’. That is, I prefer those people amongst the learned Brahmins who have developed a sincere and honest sense of renunciation, detachment, dispassion and neutrality towards everything in the world, including their own gross body and its countless pleasures, as well as the external world of material sense objects and their infinite temptations².

[²What is the use of understanding the meaning of the scriptures if a man remains hankering for worldly gains and pecuniary benefits from the material world and its sense objects? The scriptures tell him, inter alia, that everything in this world is perishable, that the only imperishable entity here is the Atma, the pure consciousness trapped in a gross body due to its past deeds, that true happiness and peace comes when this Atma is freed from this tangle, and that the world is like a spider’s web which keeps the Atma trapped like the insect caught in this web and fed upon by the spider. The learned Brahmin preaches others this fact but himself yearns for all the things that the scriptures prohibit and which he himself tells other from a pseudo moral ground. Indeed he is a pretentious man, and therefore the Lord does not like him.]

Even amongst the Viraktas, I prefer those who are ‘Gyanis’—i.e. who are wise, and have become enlightened and self-realised³.

[³Only those who have developed true realisation and enlightenment will be able to remain steady on the path of Vairagya or Virakti. The rest are prone to falter and fall by the wayside in the face of fierce and relentless onslaught of the world and its temptations.] (6)

तिन्ह ते पुनि मोहि प्रिय निज दासा । जेहि गति मोरि न दूसरि आसा ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि पुनि सत्य कहउँ तोहि पाहीं । मोहि सेवक सम प्रिय कोउ नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

tinha tē puni mōhi priya nija dāsā. jēhi gati mōri na dūsari āsā. 7.

puni puni satya kaha'um' tōhi pāhīm. mōhi sēvaka sama priya kō'u nāhīm. 8.

{Having stressed the importance of Viragya and Gyan in the path of spiritual destiny, the Lord now lays stress on the virtue and glory of Bhakti, the eclectic virtues of devotion, dedication, submission, faith and love for the Lord God by saying that out of all the learned, wise and enlightened ones, he prefers those who have become his true followers, who serve the Lord selflessly and sincerely.}

Out of them (i.e. out of those who are Gyanis as mentioned in Chaupai line no. 6 above), I prefer those who serve me, for whom there is no other succour and solace, no other destiny and destination, and no other hope and help except me.

[To wit, I have a special soft corner in my heart for those wise ones who are completely and unequivocally dependent upon me, and have submitted themselves whole-heartedly before me.]¹ (7)

[In this Chaupai, the Lord repeats his declaration that he loves his devotees over all others to remove any confusions and doubts, as well as to stress this point.]

I repeatedly and truthfully (honestly, sincerely) say to you that no one is as dear to me as my devotee and those who serve me². (8)

[Note—¹The same emotion is expressed by Lord Ram when Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, had come to seek the Lord's refuge and protection—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it. Here, Lord Ram has especially invoked Kaagbhushund to say that anyone who comes seeking his refuge after abandoning all hopes from any other quarter, then he is hereby assured by the Lord that he is most welcome—refer especially to Chaupai line no. 1 in the above cited verses.

Sage Valmiki has also reiterated this virtue of total submission, faith, devotion and love for Lord Ram, being completely dependent upon the Lord for all the needs, both the spiritual as well as the temporal, and having no expectations of any kind from any other quarter in this world as a pre-requisite for the Lord being especially gracious upon a spiritual aspirant—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 130; (iii) Doha no. 131.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 46 where Lord Ram tells the citizens of Ayodhya that if a person claims to be his follower and dependant but looks elsewhere for help, say obviously then how he can claim it to be so: he is a liar, a pretentious man who is not telling the truth. Then the Lord asserts that he is easily pleased and feel obliged to a person who is really dependent upon him completely.

²The Lord has made a similar assertion earlier when the citizens had assembled to hear him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43.

Now, this statement of Lord Ram that he gives special preference to those who serve him, must not be misconstrued to mean that he is acting arrogantly and preaching slavery. Not at all! Remember, he has reiterated in an open court when all the citizens had assembled to hear him that they should have no fear of him and are free to oppose him if they think that the Lord is saying anything wrong, improper, unholy or unrighteous—i.e. anything that goes against the principles of Dharma and the doctrines and teachings of the scriptures {refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43}, that after listening to him there are free to decide what to do and what not to do {refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 43}, and that all of them are like his brothers {refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; and (c) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46}.

भगति हीन बिरंचि किन होई । सब जीवहु सम प्रिय मोहि सोई ॥ ९ ॥

भगतिवंत अति नीचउ प्रानी । मोहि प्रानप्रिय असि मम बानी ॥ १० ॥

bhagati hīna biran̄ci kina hō'ī. saba jīvahu sama priya mōhi sō'ī. 9.
bhagativanta ati nīca'u prānī. mōhi prānapriya asi mama bānī. 10.

[Laying more stress of the grand virtue of Bhakti, the Lord continues—]

Even if someone as exalted and senior in creation as the creator Brahma himself lacks the divine virtue of Bhakti in him, then he is like all other ordinary Jivas (living beings) for me.

[To wit, even Brahma, the creator, is like other ordinary beings for me if he lacks devotion and faith in me. I will continue to love him and take care of him in the routine way I take care and look after the rest of the creation, but he cannot expect me to show any special privilege to him or come to his rescue when he is surrounded by horrendous misfortunes howling like hungry bloodhounds baying for his blood.]¹ (9)

I tell you truthfully that if a creature has devotion for me and complete faith in me, then I love him like my life even though he may be most lowly and downtrodden in the hierarchy of creation². (10)

[Note—¹Compare this line with the previous Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 86 of Uttar Kand in Ram Charit Manas. This comparison clearly indicate what the Lord means to say—it is that he takes care of the entire creation in a dispassionate manner like an emperor should without any prejudice or a partisan attitude. But like the emperor who is more concerned about those who attend to him closely, I too, being the Supreme Emperor, cannot neglect those who have complete devotion for me, who serve me diligently, faithfully and whole-heartedly. It does not mean I am biased; but tell me would it not be unfair to them if I do not give them any privilege or advantage over others who are not so loyal to me and who keep a distance from me. Remember—I won't neglect them; don't misunderstand me. I am duty-bound to take care of all of them—I have vowed it (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 7; and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 86).

This idea that even if one has the body as exalted and honourable as the creator Brahma himself, it is of no use if the person does not have Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram is reiterated by Kaagbhusund once again in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 96 where precisely the same thing is said.

²This is an important observation. All those who were fortunate enough to be graced by Lord Ram in the story of the Ramayana were low down in social and evolutionary hierarchy. Let us see who they are—

(i) The vulture Jatayu who was picked up the Lord onto his laps and his last rites (cremation) was done by the Lord himself—something his own father king Dasrath was denied—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 30 to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.

(ii) Then there was Sabari, a woman who was born in a low caste and excommunicated by the society. The Lord cheerfully ate fruits offered by her, preached her, and then gave her emancipation and salvation—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no.36. Here also, when she expressed her dilemma and extreme sense of regret that she is feeling reluctant or afraid to serve the Lord as she belonged to a low caste which forbids such service, and this will prevent her from

fulfilling her life-long desire to serve the Lord when he arrived at her hermitage, the Lord told her that he respects only Bhakti as the only condition to accept anyone, and since she has this in abundance he is most willing to accept her hospitality—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 35; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

(iii) Nishad was a boatman, but the Lord accepted him as his friend—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 104; Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 20.

(iv) Other shining examples are the monkeys such as Sugriv, the monkey king, whom also the Lord accepted as his friend—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Doha no. 4; (ii) Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes it.

Then we have Hanuman, his most trusted devotee whom the Lord had affectionately embraced on more than one occasion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 4; (ii) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33; and (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62.

Lord Ram has proclaimed that Hanuman was dearer to him as compared to even his closest brother Laxman who had suffered the torments of the forest along with the Lord shoulder-to-shoulder—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 3.

Hanuman had risen above the rest of them all to the exalted stature in as much as that the Lord declared him to be his son towards whom he will always be indebted—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32.

(v) Vibhishan, the demon brother of Ravana, the demon king, was also accepted by the Lord as his friend whom the Lord embraced affectionately—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 46, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48, (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 49, etc.

Not privately, but the Lord had declared them to be his dear friends without whose support he would not have defeated the fierce enemy, the demons, openly before the huge crowd that had gathered to greet and welcome Lord Ram when he returned to Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 8.]

{Note—The summary of what the Lord said till now is this--“All the creatures in this world have been created by me (the Supreme Being known as Ram). I love them equally as all of them are my off-springs. Out of them, I love the humans more. Out of them, I prefer Dwij (Brahmins); out of them I prefer those who are well versed in the Vedas; out of such Brahmins I prefer those who actually follow the teachings of the Vedas (instead of just muttering their hymns and incantations); out of such Brahmins I prefer those who have developed Vairagya or renunciation and dispassion; out of them I prefer those who have gained ‘Gyan’ (knowledge of spiritual matters and having wisdom); out of such people I prefer those who have ‘Vigyan’ (an in-depth clinical knowledge of spiritual matters, leading to self-realisation and enlightenment); and out of them I prefer those who are my ardent followers and are totally dependent upon me, for whom I am the only destination and refuge, the only source of succour

and solace, and the only source of help and happiness. Even Brahma, the creator, is equal to an ordinary being for me if he has no Bhakti (devotion), while the humblest and lowly of all the creatures is dearest to me and closest to my heart if he has Bhakti in him.”}]

दो०. सुचि सुसील सेवक सुमति प्रिय कहु काहि न लाग ।
श्रुति पुरान कह नीति असि सावधान सुनु काग ॥ ८६ ॥
dōhā.

suci susīla sēvaka sumati priya kahu kāhi na lāga.
śruti purāna kaha nīti asi sāvadhāna sunu kāga. 86.

Say, who does not like or favours a server or follower or subordinate who is of a pure heart, who is polite and courteous, and who is wise and intelligent.

[Lord Ram here justifies his earlier assertion that he has special place in his heart for his ardent devotees and followers. He puts a poser to those who may question the Lord’s declaration—saying in essence “Tell me, what would you do if you were in my place? How do you intend to treat someone who is loyal, faithful and totally devoted to you; who will lay down his life for you or your cause; who is completely dependent upon you?”]

Listen attentively oh Crow (“sāvadhāna sunu kāga”)! All the great scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, affirm this principle (which I have just narrated to you). (Doha no. 86)

चौ०. एक पिता के बिपुल कुमारा । होहिं पृथक गुन सील अचारा ॥ १ ॥
कोउ पंडित कोउ तापस ग्याता । कोउ धनवंत सूर कोउ दाता ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

ēka pitā kē bipula kumārā. hōhiṁ pṛthaka guna sīla acārā. 1.
kō'u paṇḍita kō'u tāpasa gyātā. kō'u dhanavanta sūra kō'u dātā. 2.

{Now, the Lord takes a simple example to bring home the point why he favours his ardent and faithful devotees as compared to other creatures inspite of the fact that all of them are his off-springs—}

Suppose a father has many sons. All of them have different qualifications and qualities, differing in nature, virtues, behaviour and attitude. (1)

One of them may be a Pandit (an expert in any vocation or profession or knowledge of the scriptures), another may be good at doing Tapa (practicing the principles of austerity, penance and suffering for some good cause), the third may be rich, the fourth may be physically strong and a brave warrior, and the fifth may be a renowned philanthropic who is known for his charitable disposition and a magnanimous attitude as a liberal donor and alms giver. (2)

कोउ सर्वग्य धर्मरत कोई । सब पर पितहि प्रीति सम होई ॥ ३ ॥

कोउ पितु भगत बचन मन कर्मा । सपनेहुँ जान न दूसर धर्मा ॥ ४ ॥

kō'u sarbagya dharmarata kō'ī. saba para pitahi prīti sama hō'ī. 3.
kō'u pitu bhagata bacana mana karmā. sapanēhum' jāna na dūsara dharmā.
4.

One of his sons may be so mystically empowered and powerful that nothing is secret from him or unknown to him. The other son may be exalted as he diligently follows the principles of Dharma.

The father will love all of them equally and treat all of them equally. All of them have auspicious qualities that give good name to the father and the family. The father is happy with all of them, and blesses all of them. (3)

Now, suppose he has a son who is completely devoted to his father so much so that he serves him with his words, actions and deeds. This particular son knows of no other Dharma (good deed) that is greater or better than serving his father loyally, faithfully, diligently, truthfully, sincerely, honestly, and exclusively.

[To wit, this son is exceptionally obedient to his father. He treats his father as being equivalent to God. He is at the beck and call of the father, and is eagerly waiting for the father to ask him to do something which he willingly rushes to do to the best of his ability. He never murmurs or swears or grudges or tries to avoid attending to the needs of his beloved father. He does never use any word that might hurt his father in the least; he is eager to carry out his instructions cheerfully; he thinks that he is serving his Lord God by serving the father.] (4)

सो सुत प्रिय पितु प्रान समाना । जद्यपि सो सब भाँति अयाना ॥ ५ ॥

एहि बिधि जीव चराचर जेते । त्रिजग देव नर असुर समेते ॥ ६ ॥

अखिल बिस्व यह मोर उपाया । सब पर मोहि बराबरि दाया ॥ ७ ॥

तिन्ह महँ जो परिहरि मद माया । भजै मोहि मन बच अरु काया ॥ ८ ॥

sō suta priya pitu prāna samānā. jadyapi sō saba bhām'ti ayānā. 5.
ēhi bidhi jīva carācara jētē. trijaga dēva nara asura samētē. 6.
akhila bisva yaha mōra upāyā. saba para mōhi barābari dāyā.
tinha maham' jō parihari mada māyā. bhajai mōhi mana baca aru kāyā. 4.

This particular son is exceedingly dear to the father even though he might lack in other qualities enumerated above (in Chaupai line nos. 1-3).

[Say, will he not be the most favoured son of the father; should the father not love him most dearly?] (5)

In a similar way, this entire creation consisting of animate as well as inanimate creatures—including the animals and birds ('Trijag'), the gods ('Deva'), the humans ('Nar) and the demons ('Asur') [6]—has been created by me; all of them are my off-springs. I have equal mercy and grace upon all of them [7]¹. (6-7).

Amongst all the creatures, they who abandon all sorts of negativity such as Mada (arrogance, haughtiness and ego) as well as Maya (delusions and their attendant deceit, pretensions and falsehoods), and instead develop the spiritual virtue of having sincere and true devotion, love, affection and faith in me—(8)

[Note—¹Refer the same declaration of the Lord earlier in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 86 herein above.]

दो०. पुरुष नपुंसक नारि वा जीव चराचर कोइ ।

सर्व भाव भज कपट तजि मोहि परम प्रिय सोइ ॥ ८७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

puruṣa napunsaka nāri vā jīva carācara kō'i.

sarba bhāva bhaja kapaṭa taji mōhi parama priya sō'i. 87 (a).

—Verily I declare that no matter which form of birth they have got in this world, to whichever denomination in the hierarchy of creation they belong, be it as a man, an impotent person, a woman, or any other Jiva (creature), whether one who has mobility (such as animals and birds) or one who can't move (such as plants or lower members of the animal kingdom)—I love them most dearly if they have no wickedness, pretensions or deceit in their mind and heart, and honestly worship me with utmost faith, are truly dedicated to me, and have an unflinching and single-minded devotion for me¹. (Doha no. 87 Ka).

[Note—¹The importance of Bhakti has been highlighted to the citizens of Ayodhya by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 45. In Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 46, the Lord reiterates that a true devotee is one who relies exclusively upon Lord Ram for all his needs, whether they pertain to his worldly needs or to his spiritual needs.]

सो०. सत्य कहउँ खग तोहि सुचि सेवक मम प्रानप्रिय ।

अस बिचारि भजु मोहि परिहरि आस भरोस सब ॥ ८७ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

satya kaha'um' khaga tōhi suci sēvaka mama prānapriya.

asa bicāri bhaju mōhi parihari āsa bharōsa saba. 87 (b).

Oh Bird (khaga)! I tell you truly and in all sincerity that a devoted servant (i.e. a follower or devotee) who is honest and pure in heart and mind is very dear to me; I love him like one loves one's own life.

Hence, keeping this in mind you should abandon all other hopes and reliance upon anyone else or any other means for your welfare, and instead always worship me, revere me, and have unwavering devotion for and faith in me¹ (bhaju mōhi).

[Remember: If you are honest and truthful in your faith and devotion for me, if you sincerely love me and have affection for me without pretensions, then be sure I will go out of my way and a step further than you to reciprocate your emotions and

sentiments. I will take full care of your well-being and welfare in all its respects, both from the temporal point of view as well as from the spiritual angle. I will be responsible for you; I will take care of you like a parent takes care of his or her innocent child.] (Sortha no. 87-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 46 where Lord Ram has told a similar thing to the citizens of Ayodhya.]

चौ०. कबहूँ काल न व्यापिहि तोही । सुमिरेसु भजेसु निरंतर मोही ॥ १ ॥
 प्रभु बचनामृत सुनि न अघाऊँ । तनु पुलकित मन अति हरषाऊँ ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

kabahūṃ kāla na byāpihi tōhī. sumirēsu bhajēsu nirantara mōhī. 1.
 prabhu bacanāmṛta suni na aghā'ūṃ. tanu pulakita mana ati haraṣā'ūṃ. 2.

[Lord Ram reiterated once again—] You will always remain immune to the effects of Kaal (time)¹.

[To wit, you will have an eternal life; you will become immortal. But however, there is a caveat here. What is it?]

Always remember me (Lord Ram), worship me, and have faith in and devotion for me (sumirēsu bhajēsu nirantara mōhī).², (1)

I was so overwhelmed with joy and bliss that I never felt contented or satiated by hearing the Lord's nectar-like sweet words that filled me with ecstasy so much so that my body was extremely thrilled and hairs on it stood on their ends. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 114 where sage Lomus has blessed Kaagbhusund in a similar manner.

²In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 94; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 96; (iv) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 109; and (v) Doha no. 113-a.

Lord Ram blessed Kaagbhusund that the factor of 'time' will have no effect on him. From the physical perspective of existence in this gross world it would mean that he will never become old or his mental faculties would not be subjected to the ravages of time like other ordinary living beings; he would remain mentally agile and intelligent forever. To wit, Lord Ram blessed the crow-saint with eternity and imperishability.

But the Lord laid down a condition. What was it? Kaagbhusund is required to focus his mind and heart on Lord Ram by remembering him at all moments of his life; he is to revere the Lord, to worship him, to have deep devotion for him, and to have an unwavering faith in the Lord without fail. This would mean that the crow-sage was to renounce his attachment with and attraction for everything pertaining to the gross physical world and its sense objects; he was to exercise exemplary self-control over his sense organs, and always remain in a state of meditation where attention is focussed on Lord Ram.

Now, the next question is: if Kaagbhusund follows the instructions of Lord Ram, how would he become immortal and attain eternity in actual sense; what does this imply? The answer is to be found in metaphysical philosophy. It means that when Kaagbhusund focuses his attention on Lord Ram and remembers the Lord always, he would be living in a perpetual state of meditation where his awareness of existence would rise above the gross world and abide in a transcendental plane, where he would identify himself with the pure super consciousness instead of the gross body. In other words, he would live in a state of Samadhi or a state of transcendental existence which is attained in higher stages of Yoga or meditation. In metaphysics, it is called the 'Turiyateet State'.

Very briefly, the 'consciousness' exists in different levels or planes as follows: (i) The Jagrat State or the 'waking state' where it relates to the gross body and the physical world; the (ii) The Swapna State or the 'dreaming state' where it withdraws from the gross body and the world but still has feelings and emotions albeit at a subtler level; (iii) The Sushupta State or the 'post-dreaming state' where it goes beyond the world of dreams and feels nothing; this state gives true rest and bliss to the Atma as there is no disturbance. From this stage, the consciousness can either revert back to the former two stages or rise higher to the next state which is called (iv) The Turiya State or the 'transcendental state of existence of the Atma' when it crosses the threshold of gross existence by remaining perpetually in a state of bliss. When this state becomes established firmly, it is said to be the (v) 'Turiyateet State'—the state of pure consciousness which is virtually irreversible. When a person reaches this eclectic state of bliss, felicity and beatitude, he may appear to be awake in the physical world in the ordinary sense of the word, but actually his mind is focussed somewhere else; it is perpetually submerged in the nectar of bliss that comes with realisation of the Atma or the pure Consciousness. He will not be aware of his physical body, of its pains or comforts. Even if his body is subjected to sufferings, he will not feel it as he is not even aware of the body's existence. This state is equivalent to being in a state of trance known as Samadhi.

We have already read that Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm, i.e. he is a personified form of Super Cosmic Consciousness—refer Doha no. 85-a. This Consciousness is also known as the Atma or the Soul as it is the essence of life in this creation; nothing that has no Atma has any relevance as far as a living world is concerned, for that which has no Atma in it is as good as dead. Remembering Lord Ram constantly means being focussed on the Atma which is pure consciousness as well as one's 'true self', one's 'true identity'. The gross body of a creature is not his true self or identity at all. This realisation would make Kaagbhusund detached from his gross physical body.

So, Kaagbhusund is expected to become self-realised and enlightened by remaining focussed on his Atma by way of constantly remembering Lord Ram, who is the cosmic Atma. He would experience the cosmic Atma in the form of Lord Ram as being present in his own innerself as his individual Atma.

Now, since the Atma or the pure consciousness is an eternal, infinite and imperishable entity as opposed to the gross physical body of a creature that is mortal and subject to decay and death, once Kaagbhusund begins to identify himself with the Atma instead of the gross body, he too would become eternal and infinite like the Atma itself.

By the blessing and grace of Lord Ram, Kaagbhusund would attain the perpetual state of transcendental existence known as Samadhi wherein he would live like an ordinary creature in this world, going about the affairs his daily routine life in

this gross world at the physical level, but remaining indifferent to it at the mental and emotional level as his mind and its attention would entirely be focussed elsewhere—i.e. his attention would be focussed on his Atma and away from the gross world even though he would be going about the daily grind of life in an ordinary way. This in turn would make him live in a perpetual state of bliss and beatitude in spite of being surrounded by the humdrum affairs of life.

Apart from this, when the time comes for him to discard his physical body that is governed by the laws of Nature, i.e. it is mortal, it becomes old and would have to die one day, he would still remain blissful in the realisation that his ‘true self’ is not his body but is his Atma which is eternal, infinite and imperishable.

In practical terms what Lord Ram says would mean that while alive Kaagbhusund will live a pious and spiritual life spent in singing the glories of the Lord and remaining submerged in the divine thoughts of the Lord that would bestow upon him extreme blissfulness and happiness, as he would be unconcerned about his gross mortal body but be focussed on his pure and eternal ‘self’ in the form of his Atma that in turn represents Lord Ram. This would mean that the Lord dwells inside Kaagbhusund’s inner-self and nowhere outside, bringing the Lord so close to the saintly Crow that no distinction would exist between the two of them!

This eclectic knowledge would make Kaagbhusund ecstatic with spiritual joy in a permanent way, and he would realise that this joy is so profound and astounding that all the comforts and pleasures of the material world and its sense objects taken together are no match for it by any measure.

Thus, since he would be self-realised and enlightened, he would have tasted the sense of blessedness, the feeling of ecstasy and beatitude that comes with the realisation that the Supreme Lord resides in one’s own inner-self as the Atma. So when the time comes, he would cheerfully abandon his present gross physical body when it becomes old and worn out, as is its wont according to the law of Nature, because he would have realised that the body does not belong to him. He would know that his Atma is his ‘real self’, and it is eternal and infinite unlike the body.

Therefore, Kaagbhusund’s ‘real self’ in the form of his Atma would abandon the present gross body and assume another physical body, and this process of creation and destruction would go on and on without really causing any mental or emotional distraction or disturbance to him.

This in essence is what Lord Ram means when he advises Kaagbhusund that if he remains steady in his devotion for the Lord, ‘time’ would not affect him, that he would be immune to its effects.]

सो सुख जानइ मन अरु काना । नहिं रसना पहिं जाइ बखाना ॥ ३ ॥

प्रभु सोभा सुख जानहिं नयना । कहि किमि सकहिं तिन्हहि नहिं बयना ॥ ४ ॥

sō sukha jāna'i mana aru kānā. nahim rasanā pahim jā'i bakhānā. 3.
prabhu sōbhā sukha jānahim nayanā. kahi kimi sakahim tinhahi nahim
bayanā.4.

The level of bliss and joy that I had experienced at that time are known by my Mana (mind and heart) and ears which had heard the sweet words of the Lord. It is not possible now for the tongue and its power of expression to describe that ecstatic feeling. (3)

Only the eyes know the sense of blessedness and bliss that it enjoyed while observing the beauteous form of the Lord (Sri Ram as a child), but how can it describe it as it lacks the power of speech to express its feelings¹. (4)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 229 when the friends of Sita had expressed their inability to describe the beauty of Lord Ram and his brother Laxman because “the tongue has no eyes, and the eyes have no tongue”.]

बहु बिधि मोहि प्रबोधि सुख देई । लगे करन सिसु कौतुक तेई ॥ ५ ॥
सजल नयन कछु मुख करि रूखा । चितइ मातु लागी अति भूखा ॥ ६ ॥

bahu bidhi mōhi prabōdhi sukha dē'ī. lagē karana sisu kautuka tē'ī. 5.
sajala nayana kachu mukha kari rūkhā. cita'i mātu lāgī ati bhūkhā. 6.

After having advised me in manifold ways and gladdening my heart by giving me immense joy, the Lord resumed his childish activities as before. (5)

Filling his eyes with tears and making his face gloomy, he glanced at his mother (Kaushalya) to indicate to her that he was very hungry. (8)

देखि मातु आतुर उठि धाई । कहि मृदु बचन लिए उर लाई ॥ ७ ॥
गोद राखि कराव पय पाना । रघुपति चरित ललित कर गाना ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi mātu ātura uṭhi dhā'ī. kahi mṛdu bacana li'ē ura lā'ī. 7.
gōda rākhi karāva paya pānā. raghupati carita lalita kara gānā. 8.

When the mother saw him, she got up immediately and ran towards him in haste. She picked him while uttering some sweet words, and affectionately clasped him to her bosom. (7)

She placed the child on her lap and began feeding him milk (i.e. suckle him), all the while singing pleasantly about his many childish plays. (8)

[Note—In Tulsidas' book “Geetawali”, Baal Kand, a vivid description is given of the affectionate way Lord Ram as a child had interacted with his mother Kaushalya. Refer: verse no. 7 where a similar incident of the Lord lying in the mother's lap and drinking milk has been narrated. Other wonderful verses of Geetawali that describe the love of mother Kaushalya for Lord Ram as a child are Baal Kand, verse nos. 18—24 where the scene of the Lord lying in the cradle and the mother softly singing songs as she slowly swings it to and fro have been beautifully described.

The scene of child Lord Ram playing in the courtyard has been narrated with exceptional aplomb in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 25—35.]

सो०. जेहि सुख लागि पुरारि असुभ बेष कृत सिव सुखद ।
 अवधपुरी नर नारि तेहि सुख महुँ संतत मगन ॥ ८८ (क) ॥
 sōraṭhā.

jēhi sukha lāgi purāri asubha bēṣa kṛta siva sukhada.
 avadhapurī nara nāri tēhi sukha mahum̐ santata magana. 88 (a).

That attainment of sublime bliss and spiritual ecstasy for which Lord Shiva, who himself is a bestower of peace, bliss and happiness to all and is a personified form of these eclectic virtues himself, had assumed a most unholy attire (by wearing a garland of skulls, wrapping serpents and smearing ash on his body, and being naked with only a tiger-skin as a loin-cloth)¹—that same mystical sense of beatitude and bliss was experienced by the citizens of Ayodhya, both the males and the females, as they always remained submerged in it². (Sortha no. 88-a)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 92; (iii) Doha no. 106 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

Lord Shiva is the Great Lord God of ascetics; he is a great Renouncer and the most enlightened, realised and wise of all the Gods. He keeps this form to indicate that he is not at all interested in the gross world and its physical attractions. He remains perpetually submerged in contemplation, reflection and meditation and its attendant sense of bliss and ecstasy, having no time or interest to bother about how he looks and what the world would think of him.

Besides this, when Lord Ram comes to this world and becomes a child, Lord Shiva too goes to Ayodhya in disguise to meet his revered Lord, like the case of sage Kaagbhusund also visiting the Lord disguised as an ordinary bird. This fact has been explicitly stated by Lord Shiva himself in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 196.

However, Shiva goes disguised as a great soothsayer or a fortune-teller who is invited by the parents of the child Lord Ram to tell them something about their son.

The unseemly attire of Shiva makes the child Ram exceedingly happy, and he pokes fun at Shiva, laughs heartily and becomes ecstatic, giggling, crackling and chuckling merrily at the funny appearance of the visitor. This behaviour of Lord Ram makes Shiva himself thrilled and ecstatic with joy unbound. So he purposely assumes the most funniest of attires so as to tickle the funny-bone of his revered Lord Ram, throwing the entire household in peels of laughter and drenches them in the nectar of happiness and merriment.

In this context, refer “Geetawali”, Baal Kand, verse no. 17 which describes one such incident of Shiva’s visit.

Another primary reason of Shiva exhibiting an unusual form that the world normally would regard as unholy is to ensure that he is left alone to meditate, as no one would like to go near anyone who appears so ridiculous and odd like Shiva does from his external appearances. The favour-seekers and boon-seekers would generally shun such a god, leaving Shiva alone at peace with himself.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 200; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 203; (iii) Doha no. 204.]

सोई सुख लवलेस जिन्ह बारक सपनेहुँ लहेउ ।
ते नहिं गनहिं खगेस ब्रह्मसुखहि सज्जन सुमति ॥ ८८ (ख) ॥

sō'ī sukha lavalēsa jinha bāraka sapanēhum' lahē'u.
tē nahim ganahim khagēsa brahmasukhahi sajjana sumati. 88 (b).

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa)! Any wise one who has been fortunate enough to ever taste or experience, even for once in his dream, that extreme mystical sense of bliss, felicity and beatitude that was experienced by Lord Shiva, by the citizens of Ayodhya as well as by me (i.e. by Kaagbhusund who is narrating this story) during that time—verily indeed and in all sooth, such a soul would never ever think of enjoying the bliss of Brahm-realisation for they regard it as inconsequential as compared to the bliss obtained by the experience of seeing Lord Ram playing as a child. [So, if they disregard Brahm-realisation, there is no question of them paying attention to other forms of joy, whether it is related to the temporal world or to the heavenly world.]¹ (Sortha no. 88-b)

[Note—¹The sight of Lord Ram fills every living being with a sense of extreme joy and happiness, and this is remarkably described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 220 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it where the citizens of Janakpur are held in complete thrall as they rush out to watch Lord Ram and Laxman who had gone on a visit to the city.

Even King Janak, who was a highly self-realised soul renowned for his spiritual wisdom and enlightenment, was so enthralled by the sight of Lord Ram that he forgot who he was and exclaimed that the joy of Brahm-realisation is no match for the joy of seeing the Lord. Janak's exhilaration and sense of extreme blissfulness is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.]

चौ०. मैं पुनि अवध रहेउँ कछु काला । देखेउँ बालबिनोद रसाला ॥ १ ॥
राम प्रसाद भगति बर पायउँ । प्रभु पद बंदि निजाश्रम आयउँ ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

mairi puni avadha rahē'um' kachu kālā. dēkhē'um' bālabinōda rasālā. 1.
rāma prasāda bhagati bara pāya'um'. prabhu pada bandi nijāśrama āya'um'. 2.

I stayed in Ayodhya for some more time¹, enjoying the enchanting sight of the many childish activities of Lord Ram. (1)

Finally, I was fortunate to be blessed by Lord Ram and was rewarded the boon of Bhakti (devotion) for him. Then I bowed my head most reverentially to the Lord and came back to my hermitage². (2)

[Note—¹How long did Kaagbhusund stay with the Lord in Ayodhya? He himself has answered it in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 75, which says he abided there “for five years”.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 114.]

तब ते मोहि न ब्यापी माया । जब ते रघुनायक अपनाया ॥ ३ ॥
यह सब गुप्त चरित मैं गावा । हरि मायाँ जिमि मोहि नचावा ॥ ४ ॥

taba tē mōhi na byāpī māyā. jaba tē raghunāyaka apanāyā. 3.
yaha saba gupta carita maiṁ gāvā. hari māyām̐ jimi mōhi nacāvā. 4.

Since that time when Lord Ram accepted me and blessed me, Maya (delusions) has had no effect upon me; I am freed from all confusions and doubts for all times to come. (3)

I have narrated in detail this secret story of how Lord Hari's Maya (his delusion creating powers) had kept me enthralled and made me dance to its tunes¹. (4)

[Note—¹What transpired between Kaagbhusund and Lord Ram was such a profound secret affair that no one present on the occasion could know anything about it. This is clearly mentioned while the saintly crow describes his experiences wherein he had seen the cosmic form of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 79.]

निज अनुभव अब कहउँ खगेसा । बिनु हरि भजन न जाहिं कलेसा ॥ ५ ॥
राम कृपा बिनु सुनु खगराई । जानि न जाइ राम प्रभुताई ॥ ६ ॥

nija anubhava aba kaha'um̐ khagēsā. binu hari bhajana na jāhiṁ kalēsā. 5.
rāma kṛpā binu sunu khagarā'ī. jāni na jā'ī rāma prabhutā'ī. 6.

Oh King of Birds (khagēsā)! I will now tell you what I have deduced based on my personal experiences, what I have finally realised—and it is that none of the miseries, torments, griefs and pains associated with life can ever be eliminated or overcome without doing 'Bhajan' of Lord Hari (Sri Ram).

[To wit, without worshipping the Lord and adoring him, without having devotion for him and surrendering before him, without revering the Lord and paying one's obeisance to him, it is futile to expect freedom from miseries, torments and troubles of life.]¹ (5)

Oh King of Birds (khagarā'ī)! And the second thing that I have realised is this: That without the grace of Lord Ram it is not possible to understand or fathom the immensity and profundity of Lord Ram's glories, majesty and greatness, about the Lord's divinity and holiness. (6)

[Note—¹In the verses that follow, Kaagbhusund has laid down some cardinal principles of life. They are worth noting by a sincere seeker as they would guide him along and show him the way in life.]

जानें बिनु न होइ परतीती । बिनु परतीति होइ नहिं प्रीती ॥ ७ ॥
 प्रीति बिना नहिं भगति दिढ़ाई । जिमि खगपति जल कै चिकनाई ॥ ८ ॥

jānēm binu na hō'i paratīti. binu paratīti hō'i nahim prīti. 7.
 prīti binā nahim bhagati dirhā'ī. jimi khagapati jala kai cikanā'ī. 8.

Without this knowledge and realisation, one would not have sufficient level of faith and conviction for the Lord (or it would be difficult to sustain them even if one manages to develop these virtues inside him for some time). And without having faith, it is difficult to have affection for the Lord. (7)

Without faith and affection, it is impossible to have steady Bhakti or devotion for the Lord. Oh King of Birds (khagapati)! It is like the case of lubricity caused by water for it is only a temporary thing, because as soon as the water dries up the lubricity too vanishes¹. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, if one does not know who Lord Ram really is, if he does not realise that he is the Supreme Being in a personified form, then he would be soon overcome by confusions and doubts as was the case with Garud. As a result, he would not be able to develop deep faith for the Lord, and in the absence of this he would not be able to have firm devotion for the Lord either.]

सो०. बिनु गुर होइ कि ग्यान ग्यान कि होइ बिराग बिनु ।
 गावहिं बेद पुरान सुख कि लहिअ हरि भगति बिनु ॥ ८९ (क) ॥
 sōraṭhā.

binu gura hō'i ki gyāna gyāna ki hō'i birāga binu.
 gāvahim bēda purāna sukha ki lahi'a hari bhagati binu. 89 (a).

Is it possible to have Gyan (true knowledge about spiritual subjects; true spiritual wisdom) without the help of a Guru (preceptor)¹?

Can anyone have Gyan without inculcating the virtue of Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion from irrelevant things or subjects that have no bearing to his objective).

Or, as the primary scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans 'sing' or assert and declare in an unequivocal language, can anyone ever have true happiness and bliss (in life) without having Bhakti (or devotion) for Lord Hari (the Lord God, i.e. Lord Ram in the present context)³? (Sortha no. 89-a)

[Note—¹A wise and learned preceptor would explain the intricacies pertaining to spiritual matters to a seeker in the same way a school teacher teaches a diligent student in his class. But what would a teacher or the preceptor do if the student or the seeker is not sincere to learn? And when he fails to attain the desired goal or knowledge, he goes out and blames his teacher or school or the preceptor for his own follies, his own failures and shortcomings.

²If a school student constantly getting distracted by myriad of things, he would not be able to concentrate on his studies, and this would naturally result in failure. Why should he then blame his school or teacher? Similarly, if one chooses to walk on the path leading to the Lord God, he must keep himself focussed by turning his mind away from all worldly attractions and temptations. Otherwise he would be worse off, being neither here nor there. Pretensions won't help as they would be like cheating one's own self.

³This statement highlights the main reward of having Bhakti—it is that the practitioner gets to have happiness and bliss in his life. After all, every endeavour a person makes has the objective of getting joy, happiness, comfort and peace, and if this is not achieved all efforts are wasted. Bhakti frees the creature from spiritual worries as now he is certain that the Lord God is over his head to take care of him, both in this life and in the life hereafter. Freedom from all sorts of worries in itself is a great bestower of joy, happiness, bliss and mental peace.]

कोउ बिश्राम कि पाव तात सहज संतोष बिनु।

चलै कि जल बिनु नाव कोटि जतन पचि पचि मरिअ ॥ ८९ (ख) ॥

kō'u biśrāma ki pāva tāta sahaja santōṣa binu.

calai ki jala binu nāva kōṭi jatana paci paci mari'a. 89 (b).

Dear (tāta), can anyone ever find rest, peace and tranquillity without having a natural sense of contentedness with whatever one has.

Can a boat float without water under it even if one dies making countless efforts to move it, and strains every nerve of his body till his last breath trying to row the boat?

[To wit, just as it is impossible to row the boat and make it move ahead if it is not floating on water, it is also impossible to find peace and tranquillity if one does not feel contented in one's heart and mind with whatever one has. This is because desires, wants, longings and yearnings have no end, and unless one is satisfied with himself and has renounced desires and longings, he will never be at rest for his entire life would be spent in fulfilling them. If he manages to fulfil one desire, other desires rear their heads one after another, and the vicious cycle continues unabated.] (Sortha no. 89-b)

चौ०. बिनु संतोष न काम नसाहीं । काम अछत सुख सपनेहुँ नाहीं ॥ १ ॥

राम भजन बिनु मिटहिं कि कामा । थल बिहीन तरु कबहुँ कि जामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

binu santōṣa na kāmā nasāhīm. kāmā achata sukha sapanēhum' nāhīm. 1.

rāma bhajana binu miṭahīm ki kāmā. thala bihīna taru kabahum' ki jāmā. 2.

Without having contentedness (known as “santōṣa”) one’s desires, wants and longings (known as “kāma”) never cease, and as long as they are present one can never find happiness and peace even in one’s dream¹. (1)

Can desires, wants and longings ever be eliminated without worshipping, adoring and having devotion for Lord Ram (compositely known as “bhajana”)²? Say, can a tree ever take root without soil (or earth)?

[To wit, just as it is not possible to expect a tree to grow without soil and earth to give its roots a solid foundation, it is also not possible to overcome Kaam without having contentedness on the one hand, and without worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram on the other hand.] (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 16.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 90.]

बिनु बिग्यान कि समता आवइ । कोउ अवकास कि नभ बिनु पावइ ॥ ३ ॥
श्रद्धा बिना धर्म नहिं होई । बिनु महि गंध कि पावइ कोई ॥ ४ ॥

binu bigyāna ki samatā āva'i. kō'u avakāsa ki nabha binu pāva'i. 3.
śrad'dhā binā dharma nahim hō'ī. binu mahi gandha ki pāva'i kō'ī. 4.

Can anyone have calmness and evenness of mind and steadfastness of thoughts without having spiritual wisdom and enlightenment¹?

Can anyone find space for movement without the presence of ether or the sky element²? (3)

It is not possible to practice the principles of Dharma (practicing a life of piety, probity and auspiciousness; a religious way of life marked by righteous conduct and thought) without having faith and firm belief in it³.

Say, can anyone smell something if there was no earth⁴? (4)

[Note—¹In the absence of wisdom and enlightenment, a creature would be fickle in mind and body. His thoughts would wander randomly like a free horse. With an unbridled mind there obviously cannot be any peace and rest for the creature. Without having spiritual wisdom and enlightenment it is not possible to see the world as being a manifestation of the same universal Atma or pure consciousness. Without this eclectic knowledge, one cannot view the world in a uniform way, and without this uniformity one is bound to distinguish between different things and people in this world as one giving joy and the other giving sorrows. How can one find real and true peace with this attitude when one sees someone as his enemy and the other has his friend; or as one thing that gives comfort in a given situation and the same thing giving discomfort or pain in a different situation?

²If there is no sky element then the world would be a solid block of rock in which there would be no space even to breathe to survive.

³To wit, one has to have faith in the principles of Dharma in order to be able to follow them voluntarily, without prodding, and with full diligence and sincerity. Otherwise it would be a forced and boring affair that would not give the desired reward. And if one does not get the desired reward as expected by following Dharma, his faith in it would be further eroded. So the vicious cycle would destroy whatever little gain was made in the beginning. Hence, it is necessary to follow the laws and rules of Dharma in order to reap its full spiritual harvest.

⁴In outer space there is no odour of any kind. It is a characteristic feature of earth. The earth has its natural scent as is proved when one sprinkles water on dry soil: an earthy odour giving a sensation of dampness of soil is immediately felt. The same thing happens when the first rain falls on earth; the soil emanates a sweet earthy smell which spreads in the environment. So, just like it is not possible to have any kind of smell without earth, it is also not possible to diligently and voluntarily follow the principles of Dharma if one is not convinced of its value and usefulness.]

बिनु तप तेज कि कर बिस्तारा । जल बिनु रस कि होइ संसारा ॥ ५ ॥
सील कि मिल बिनु बुध सेवकाई । जिमि बिनु तेज न रूप गोसाँई ॥ ६ ॥

binu tapa tēja ki kara bistārā. jala binu rasa ki hō'i sansārā. 5.
sīla ki mila binu budha sēvakāī. jimi binu tēja na rūpa gōsāmī. 6.

Can anyone acquire the attributes of pristine glory, stupendous mystical powers and reach the pinnacle of spiritual potentials without attaining the powers and potentials that are inherent in Tapa (practicing austerities and doing penance)?

Can there be any taste without the presence of water (element) in this world¹?
(5)

[Kaagbhusund continues with his preaching to Garud who is listening attentively to the discourse—] Can anyone learn good manners and acquire excellent qualities without serving those who are wise and learned (i.e. without being in close contact with people who have excellent character and live an exemplary life so that one can learn from their example)?

Oh Lord (gōsāmī)! It is just not possible (to acquire goodness without serving and being in the company of those who are good themselves) like it being impractical to expect to have fire without its inherent colour². (6)

[Note—¹The tongue has taste buds which secrete enzymes that react with the chemicals present in the food eaten to give a sense of taste that is unique to that food. But for this purpose the 'water element' is a necessity so that the chemical reactions can occur, that would in turn generate signals that are transported to the brain by the concerned nerves to activate that part of the brain which interpret the incoming stimulus and converts it into the sensation of taste.

²Fire has a radiant splendour and a fiery glow that is inherent to it and inseparable from it. There cannot be a fire without its natural glow and fiery colour.

Similarly, those who practice Tapa and lead a spiritual way of life, practicing all that involves the principles of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility in thought and conduct), effuse a halo of holiness and divinity that comes from within them like a glow from a glow-worm. This halo arises from their enlightened inner-self because this glow is as an extension of the radiance of their Atma which is self-illuminated and splendidous like the brilliance of the fire element.

Further, anything that is near a raging fire too begins to glow; it would become red hot and glow. Similarly, when a person stays in the company of wise and learned men he would also be naturally influenced by them. Goodness and virtuousness would come to them naturally and automatically. They would begin to reflect the holiness and auspiciousness of the holy men they serve.

The example of the fire having a natural radiance and colour is cited here to stress that when all spiritual impurities are removed by one's long association with saints and pious people then saintly characters would come naturally to him, and the fortunate person would begin to exhibit excellent virtues that would make him glorious and stand out as a beacon of hope for others in a dark world.]

निज सुख बिनु मन होइ कि थीरा । परस कि होइ बिहीन समीरा ॥ ७ ॥

कवनिउ सिद्धि कि बिनु बिस्वासा । बिनु हरि भजन न भव भय नासा ॥ ८ ॥

nija sukha binu mana hō'i ki thīrā. parasa ki hō'i bihīna samīrā.

kavani'u sid'dhi ki binu bisvāsā. binu hari bhajana na bhava bhaya nāsā. 4.

Can one's Mana (the combination of mind and heart) ever find stability and rest without experiencing the bliss of self-realisation ("nija sukha")? [Or, can anyone finding stability of the Mana without finding something that would give a person true and real happiness and comfort in life.]¹?

Can there be the sensation or a feel of touch without the presence of the air (element)²? (7)

Can anyone attain success in any endeavour and reach one's goals without having faith and belief³?

Indeed and in all sooth and without gainsay, the fears, the torments and the miseries associated with this mundane world consisting of the cycle of birth and death cannot be eliminated without worshipping and having reverence for Lord Hari (the Lord God, the Supreme Being, the Parmatma)⁴. (8)

[Note—¹It is the natural desire of the creature's Mana to seek peace, rest, happiness, joy, comfort and pleasure in life. But mistakenly it seeks them in the outside world and feels frustrated as what the world gives is only temporary and of very superficial nature as everything vanishes sooner or later like a cloud. To wit, the happiness and joy that the world provides is not sustainable. The result is that the creature remains agitated and frustrated in its quest for peace and happiness.

But once a person becomes wisened and understands about where lies the true source of happiness and bliss by the virtue of the company of saints and self-realised souls that he keeps because he observes that they are in a perpetual state of bliss and blessedness, he too endeavours to practice to turn inwards and learn to enjoy the bliss

that comes with self-realisation of the 'Atma', the pure Consciousness that is the source of eternal bliss and happiness.

Once this eternal source of bliss and happiness is accessed, the seeker's Mana becomes restful and calm and steady. It stops its restless wonderings and of being in a state of constant flux.

In this context refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45 where the emotional condition of king Dasrath is being described. It is said here that his emotional and mental condition was as shaky and uncertain like the leaf of the banyan tree that sways and shakes wildly in the wind.

²Air is not visible, but still when a soft breeze blows we can feel it touching our faces or caressing the skin of the body in general. The air element keeps the body alive, and therefore it is called 'vital wind or vital air element' in metaphysics. Can a dead body feel or touch anything? Therefore, the 'air or the wind element' is necessary for the sensation of touch to exist; it helps the creature to feel the presence of life within his own body as well as in the external world.

³No one can ever attain success in anything if he is not sure of what he is doing, if he does not have faith in his own abilities, if he has no confidence in himself, if he does not believe that he would surely attain success, if he has no faith in the worth of the goal or the objective he is pursuing and feels that he is merely wasting his time and energy in its pursuit. First and foremost requirement to attain success in any endeavour therefore is to have firm faith in one's own self, to have a firm belief that he would indeed succeed, and a faith and belief that the goal or objective when attained would serve him for his own good. Otherwise, it would be a half-hearted and disinterested effort which is sure to fail.

⁴To wit, one cannot attain fearlessness from the torments of the world without having faith in Lord Hari or Lord Ram. One must have a firm belief in the Lord to find peace and stability of mind and heart.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80; and (iii) Doha no. 122-a.]

दो०. बिनु बिस्वास भगति नहिं तेहि बिनु द्रवहिं न रामु ।
राम कृपा बिनु सपनेहुँ जीव न लह बिश्रामु ॥ ९० (क) ॥
dōhā.

binu bisvāsa bhagati nahim tēhi binu dravahim na rāmu.
rāma kṛpā binu sapanēhum jīva na laha biśrāmu. 90 (a).

It is not possible to have Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Ram without having a faith and belief in him¹. And without Bhakti, Lord Ram cannot be pleased; his heart would not melt and become mellowed for a Jiva (living being) without the latter having Bhakti for him².

And without Lord Ram's grace, blessings and benevolence, a Jiva can never find rest and peace even in a dream. (Doha no. 90-a)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 80; (b) Aranya Kand, (i) Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 42; (c) Uttar Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Doha no. 90; (iii) Doha no. 103-a; (iv) Doha no. 126.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36 where Lord Ram has stressed the importance of Bhakti and outlined the different types of Bhaktis there are. He also reiterates that without Bhakti it is not possible to please him.

There are countless verses in Ram Charit Manas where the importance and significance of Bhakti have been highlighted. Some of them in the present Canto called Uttar Kand are the following: (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 35; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (iii) Doha no. 78; (iv) Doha no. 85-b; (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 119; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 7-19 that precede Doha no. 12.]

सो०. अस बिचारि मतिधीर तजि कुतर्क संसय सकल ।

भजहु राम रघुबीर करुनाकर सुंदर सुखद ॥ १० (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

asa bicāri matidhīra taji kutarka sansaya sakala.

bhajahu rāma raghubīra karunākara sundara sukhada. 90 (b).

[Sage Kaagbhusund advises Garud thus—] Keeping the aforesaid principle in view, be wise and have a stable mind by discarding all sorts of scepticism, confusions and doubts. With this erudition and wisdom, you should worship, revere and adore Lord Ram, the brave Lord of king Raghu's race (of Ayodhya—"rāma raghubīra"), the Lord who is most merciful and compassionate, who is beautiful (because of his excellent virtues and characters), and who is a bestower of (spiritual and temporal) happiness and comfort¹. (Sortha no. 90-b)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 200; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 66; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 85.]

चौ०. निज मति सरिस नाथ मैं गाई । प्रभु प्रताप महिमा खगराई ॥ १ ॥

कहेउँ न कछु करि जुगुति बिसेषी । यह सब मैं निज नयनन्हि देखी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nija mati sarisa nātha mair̥m gā'ī. prabhu pratāpa mahimā khagarā'ī. 1.

kahē'um̐ na kachu kari juguti bisēṣī. yaha saba mair̥m nija nayanānhi dēkhī. 2.

[The crow-saint Kaagbhusund said to Garud—] Oh Lord and the King of Birds (nātha; khagarā'ī)! I have recited (narrated) the story describing the majestic glories

and the greatness of my Lord (Sri Ram) in accordance with my intellect and wisdom¹.
(1)

I have not invented anything to spice up the narration and add colour or flavour to it because I have seen all this with my own eyes; I am a witness to what I have told you².

[To wit, the divine, holy and glorious story of my Lord Ram that I, Kaagbhusund, have narrated to you, Garud, is a truthful and honest account of the events as I had seen them myself, and I bear witness to it. It's not something imaginary or cooked-up.] (2).

[Note—¹Lord Ram's story is so vast and of a myriad variety that it would be wrong to claim that a particular version is the only and the most perfect narration of the events, with nothing missing from it. Each narrator is honest in rendering this holy story of the Ramayan, though one narrator's version may differ from another's. This fact is reiterated in verse nos. 3-6 that follow herein below. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 33.

Even Lord Shiva asserted that there are many versions of the story of Lord Ram's time, life and deeds on earth as the Lord had manifested himself on countless occasions, and therefore a particular story narrating one of such manifestations would surely differ from the other in its finer details, though the overall structure remains the same as the Lord himself is the same. So, when Shiva began his narration of the story for the benefit of his consort Uma, he selected one such version that came to his mind. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 114; (ii) Sortha no. 120-d; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 122.

²This statement of Kaagbhusund 'that he is not exaggerating anything as he had personally seen or witnessed all the events that he has narrated while telling the story of the Ramayan to Garud' has a profound metaphysical and spiritual import. On the face it looks that he had been with Lord Ram throughout his life, even accompanying him to the forest and witnessing all the events occurring there, watched the war of Lanka from somewhere, and finally witnessed the Lord's coronation on the throne of Ayodhya upon his return from the forest after fourteen years of absence.

But the fact is that he went to Ayodhya and stayed there for only five years when Lord Ram was a child. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 75 ("I stayed for five years at Ayodhya"); and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 89 ("I stayed for some time at Ayodhya").

So what does this imply? Kaagbhusund was not an ordinary bird known as crow as we understand the word 'crow' to mean. He was a self-realised soul who could identify himself with his Atma which is pure consciousness that lived inside his physical gross body of a crow. So when he deeply meditated, he transported himself from the physical world to the transcendental world of pure consciousness, and in this state Kaagbhusund was not the physical crow as the world knew him, but was the Atma which the world could not see.

Now, this entity known as the Atma is universal and all-knowing. Whatever the Atma wants to know becomes known to it. The reason is that the individual's Atma is a small fraction of the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma. Lord Ram is the Parmatma, and therefore the Atma of Kaagbhusund was a 'kin' of this cosmic Atma. When a kin wants access to someone, it is very easy for him to do so. Hence, when

Kaagbusund wished to know what his senior kin, in this case the Parmatma known as Lord Ram, did during a particular period, he could easily know about it.

In a way, therefore, what he means by saying that ‘he saw the events with his eyes’ is that he could see them with ‘his inner-eyes of awareness that his Atma inherently possessed; the knowledge that his pure consciousness gained by the mere wish of it’, and not by the physical eyes of his body!]

महिमा नाम रूप गुण गाथा । सकल अमित अनंत रघुनाथा ॥ ३ ॥

निज निज मति मुनि हरि गुण गावहिं । निगम सेष सिव पार न पावहिं ॥ ४ ॥

mahimā nāma rūpa guna gāthā. sakala amita ananta raghunāthā. 3.

nija nija mati muni hari guna gāvahim. nigama sēṣa siva pāra na pāvahim. 4.

The majesty and the greatness, the stupendity of the glory, the divinity and the holiness of Lord Ram’s name, his visible form, his excellent qualities as well as the variety of his mystical stories—all of them are endless and boundless just like the Lord himself¹. (3)

The great sages, saints, seers, hermits, mystics and enlightened ones—all have sung or recited the Lord’s divine story in accordance with their intellectual abilities and understanding. Even Vedas (the primary scriptures), Lord Shiva (the Great God who is deemed to be the wisest and the most enlightened in the pantheon of Gods), and Lord Sheshnath (the cosmic serpent said to hold this world aloft its hood) can’t reach the end of it². (4)

[Note—¹To wit, the Lord in his cosmic form is the Supreme Atma known as the ‘Parmatma’. He is also known as ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being representing pure cosmic Consciousness that has eclectic qualities of being eternal, infinite and universal. This cosmic entity is beyond comprehension. Therefore, all the attempts made to describe such an esoteric entity are limited in their reach and scope as the Lord can’t be known, described, measured and weighed in entirety by any means whatsoever, making all narrations or renderings of his story have a limited extent.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 114; (iii) Sortha no. 120-d; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 122.]

तुम्हहि आदि खग मसक प्रजंता । नभ उड़ाहिं नहिं पावहिं अंता ॥ ५ ॥

तिमि रघुपति महिमा अवगाहा । तात कबहुँ कोउ पाव कि थाहा ॥ ६ ॥

tumhahi ādi khaga masaka prajantā. nabha urāhim nahim pāvahim antā. 5.

timi raghupati mahimā avagāhā. tāta kabahum’ kō’u pāva ki thāhā. 6.

[Kaagbhusund gives an analogy to explain what he means.] All winged creatures (i.e. the birds) like you fly high in the sky according to their capacity, but none can find the depth or an end of it (the sky). (5)

Oh dear Garud (tāta), in the same fashion who can fathom the fathomless depth of Lord Ram's glories, majesty and greatness.

[To wit, just as no one can measure the sky and claim to have reached its end, no one can also claim that he knows the full story of Lord Ram's life, time and deeds. What he knows and narrates is a part or version of it, and each such version is correct in itself.] (6)

रामु काम सत कोटि सुभग तन । दुर्गा कोटि अमित अरि मर्दन ॥ ७ ॥
सक्र कोटि सत सरिस बिलासा । नभ सत कोटि अमित अवकासा ॥ ८ ॥

rāmu kāma sata kōṭi subhaga tana. durgā kōṭi amita ari mardana. 7.
sakra kōṭi sata sarisa bilāsā. nabha sata kōṭi amita avakāsā. 8.

[Now, the greatness, the majesty and the excellent qualities of Lord Ram are being outlined by citing analogies and metaphors to help in comparison and understanding the immensity of each virtue of the Lord.]

Lord Ram's physical form is equivalent to millions (i.e. countless) Kaams (cupids; the patron god of beauty and charm) in its attractiveness, charm and beauty.

He is an eliminator of enemies like millions of goddess Durgas¹ rolled into one. [To wit, Lord Ram can defeat, vanquish, destroy and crush even the most formidable and invincible of enemies of a devotee.] (7)

Lord Ram's majesty, powers and authority is equivalent to what millions of Indras, the King of Gods, possess.

His abode and extension is equivalent to millions of skies taken together. [To wit, the Lord is as infinite, immeasurable and fathomless as the vast and endless sky.] (8)

[Note—¹Goddess Durga is the form of the cosmic Shakti, the dynamic powers of the Supreme Being that can defeat and eliminate all evil forces in creation that cause sufferings to its inhabitants. She is usually worshipped by the warrior class to invoke her blessings to overcome one's enemies.]

दो०. मरुत कोटि सत बिपुल बल रबि सत कोटि प्रकास ।
ससि सत कोटि सुसीतल समन सकल भव त्रास ॥ ९१ (क) ॥

dōhā.

maruta kōṭi sata bipula bala rabi sata kōṭi prakāsa.
sasi sata kōṭi susītala samana sakala bhava trāsa. 91 (a).

He has the immensity of strength, might and force that is equivalent to what millions and trillions of (i.e. countless)¹ Wind Gods possess.

Similarly, his brilliance, radiance and glory are equivalent to millions of (countless) suns.

He is calm, soothing and comforting like millions of full moons.

And he is the one who can eliminate or destroy or dispel all the fears and torments caused by mundane existence in a world consisting of the cycle of birth and death with its accompanying miseries, grief and pain. (Doha no. 91-a)

[Note—¹The phrase used in the text is “kōṭi sata”. ‘Koti’ means ten millions, and ‘Sata’ means seven. It is a figure of speech to mean a very large quantity or number of something. So here it means Lord Ram possesses strength and might that are absolutely stupendous and immeasurable. The ‘wind force’ is cited here because no one can actually see the wind in physical terms to judge how strong and powerful it can be, but a fierce storm can have immense punch and force enough to uproot huge trees and raise the ocean to form giant waves of destructive proportions; it can overturn ships that used sails and relied on wind to drive them; it can made such ships go off course and collide with rocks; and it can even down modern airplanes.

Similarly, Lord Ram’s astounding strength and powers are subtle and invisible from the outside. On the surface he appears to be like an ordinary human being, but his inner strength is immeasurable, and it is infinite and intense in its force and punch.]

काल कोटि सत सरिस अति दुस्तर दुर्ग दुरंत ।
धूमकेतु सत कोटि सम दुराधरष भगवंत ॥ ९१ (ख) ॥

kāla kōṭi sata sarisa ati dustara durga duranta.
dhūmakētu sata kōṭi sama durādharāṣa bhagavanta. 91 (b).

Like numerous Gods of death, he is irresistible, formidable and invincible.

And the Lord (bhagavanta) is irrepressible and unstoppable like countless comets (balls of fire)¹. (Doha no. 91-b)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “dhūmakētu”. It literally means a comet. But this is a metaphoric way of taking the example of a cannon ball which is a ‘ball of fire’ when shot from the barrel of the cannon; it just cannot be stopped in its flight towards its target, and anything it touches is reduced to ash due to its searing heat. It appears to resemble a comet streaking through the night sky, a ball of fire flying from one end of the horizon to the other unobstructed and unopposed.

Lord Ram is similarly empowered. No one can stop him if he decided to do something. His potentials and dynamism are like a ball of fire. His glories, virtues, character, authority and strength are so remarkable that they stand out and can be easily noticed like a comet streaking across the sky.

Lord Ram does not exhibit his majestic powers too often, but when he does it is outstanding. It is like the case of a comet that does not make its appearance in a routine manner like the moon, the stars and the sun, but when it does it is immediately noticed and becomes instantly recognisable.]

चौ०. प्रभु अगाध सत कोटि पताला । समन कोटि सत सरिस कराला ॥ १ ॥

तीरथ अमित कोटि सम पावन । नाम अखिल अघ पूग नसावन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu agādha sata kōṭi patālā. samana kōṭi sata sarisa karālā. 1.
tīratha amita kōṭi sama pāvana. nāma akhila agha pūga nasāvana. 2.

The Lord (“prabhu”—i.e. Sri Ram) is fathomless and endless like millions of (i.e. countless) subterranean worlds or the nether worlds (patālā).

He is dreadful and fear-inspiring like millions (countless) Yamas¹ (God of Death). (1)

He is as holy, pure and sanctified as millions (countless) pilgrim places taken together. [Or, he is as purifying and a provider of salvation as countless pilgrim places combined.]

His holy name is powerful enough to destroy or neutralise the combined effects of all the sins (akhila agha). (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram appears to be fearful to those who are sinners, who are wicked, and who are evil in their hearts. A person who has led a good and meritorious life has no fear of the God of death or Yama because he is certain that Yama just can’t send him to hell to suffer. Only those who are sinful fear Yama. Similarly, only those who are sinful, pervert and corrupt need to fear Lord Ram. For those who are good and righteous, Lord Ram is like a dear friend.

हिमगिरि कोटि अचल रघुबीरा । सिंधु कोटि सत सम गंभीरा ॥ ३ ॥

कामधेनु सत कोटि समाना । सकल काम दायक भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

himagiri kōṭi acala raghubīrā. sindhu kōṭi sata sama gambhīrā. 3.
kāmadhēnu sata kōṭi samānā. sakala kāma dāyaka bhagavānā. 4.

Lord Ram, the brave warrior of the king Raghu’s race (raghubīrā), is steadfast, stable, unwavering, unchanging and serious as numerous snow-covered mountains (known as the Himalayas) taken together¹.

He is deep, grave, serious and emotionless as millions of (i.e. numerous) oceans². (3)

Like countless Kamdhenu cows, he can grant (fulfil) all the wishes and desires of his devotees³. (4)

[Note—¹Just as the mighty Himalayas that are not affected by any change in the world, Lord Ram too remains calm and peaceful in a world mired by turmoil and subject to constant changes.

²The Ocean is very deep, dense and grave. Though on the surface it may roar and seem to be choppy with huge tumultuous waves, but deep inside it is calm and dense. Similarly, Lord Ram may appear on the surface to exhibit so much variance in character, emotions and qualities, and he may do so many different deeds and behave differently under different situations, but internally he is as quiet, dense, grave and serious as the depths of the mighty ocean. Not even the earthquake affects the deep recesses of the ocean.

³The 'Kamdhenu cow' is the cow of gods. It has the mystical ability to give whatever is asked from it. Similarly, Lord Ram fulfils all the desires and needs of his devotees.]

सारद कोटि अमित चतुराई । बिधि सत कोटि सृष्टि निपुनाई ॥ ५ ॥
बिष्णु कोटि सम पालन कर्ता । रुद्र कोटि सत सम संहर्ता ॥ ६ ॥

sārada kōṭi amita caturā'ī. bidhi sata kōṭi sṛṣṭi nipunā'ī. 5.
biṣṇu kōṭi sama pālana kartā. rudra kōṭi sata sama saṁhartā. 6.

The Lord (Sri Ram) is wise and clever like millions of Goddess Saraswatis (the patron goddess of wisdom, knowledge and learning).

He is an expert in all the fields of knowledge and has creative expertise required to create millions of creations at once just like the expertise of millions of (i.e. innumerable) Vidhis (the creator known as Brahma) taken together. (6)

He is a sustainer and protector of this creation like millions of (i.e. countless) Vishnus combined.

And likewise, he (Lord Ram) has the ability to terminate this creation as possessed by millions of Shivas (who is the Lord responsible to bring an end to a particular phase of creation) working together. (6)

धनद कोटि सत सम धनवाना । माया कोटि प्रपंच निधाना ॥ ७ ॥
भार धरन सत कोटि अहीसा । निरवधि निरुपम प्रभु जगदीसा ॥ ८ ॥

dhanada kōṭi sata sama dhanavānā. māyā kōṭi prapañca nidhānā. 7.
bhāra dharana sata kōṭi ahīsā. niravadhi nirupama prabhu jagadīsā. 8.

He is rich and prosperous like millions of (i.e. numerous) Kubers (the God of wealth who is responsible for the treasury of the Gods)¹.

The Lord has stupendous abilities to create countless delusions (māyā) on the one hand, and to control such delusions on the other hand. [It is because he is the Lord of Maya.] (7)

He has the ability to bear the burden of the world, no matter how heavy and massive it is, like millions of celestial serpents known as Seshnath would do simultaneously².

Forsooth, Lord Ram is indeed the sovereign Lord of the entire creation, one who has infinite glories, powers, abilities, authority and strength that have no comparison anywhere. (8)

[Note—¹It simply means that Lord Ram has no dearth of anything or any material in this world. Therefore it follows that he can liberally give anything which his devotees seek from him. Only someone who has abundance of anything can cheerfully share or give it to others. A pauper can't do so even if he wants to.

²To wit, Lord Ram can very easily take care of this creation with all its inconsistencies and problems. According to mythology, the world is held aloft on the

hood of a serpent known as Seshnath which prevents it from sinking into the void of the cosmic ocean. The comparison with millions of such Seshnaths means that even if the world becomes so full of sins and evil properties that it turns thousands of times denser or grosser than what it is at present, still Lord Ram can sustain it and take care of its welfare.]

छं०. निरुपम न उपमा आन राम समान रामु निगम कहै । १ ।
जिमि कोटि सत खद्योत सम रबि कहत अति लघुता लहै ॥ २ ॥
एहि भाँति निज निज मति बिलास मुनीस हरिहि बखानहीं । ४ ।
प्रभु भाव गाहक अति कृपाल सप्रेम सुनि सुख मानहीं ॥ ३ ॥

chanda.

nirupama na upamā āna rāma samāna rāmu nigama kahai. 1.
jimi kōṭi sata khadyōta sama rabi kahata ati laghutā lahai. 2.
ēhi bhāmṭi nija nija mati bilāsa munīsa harihi bakhānahīm. 3.
prabhu bhāva gāhaka ati kṛpāla saprēma suni sukha mānahīm. 4.

The Vedas (primary scriptures) declare unanimously that Lord Ram is incomparable; he has no peer. Indeed and without gainsay, Lord Ram is comparable to only himself and no one else¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

It would be demeaning for the glory of the sun and causing diminution to its cosmic splendour and high stature by trying to compare its brilliance with the combined light emanating from millions of glow-worms. [To wit, it is really insulting and humiliating for the sun to be compared to the humble and inconsequential glow-worm out of the myriad sources of bright light in this universe in order to gauge how brilliant the sun is. Likewise it is highly incongruous, ridiculous and absurd to compare Lord Ram with any other god or living being for none can compare with the Lord's glory even fractionally.] (Chanda line no. 2)

So, the great and seers expound about the glories, the majesty, the holiness, the divinity, the powers, the authority and the mysteries of the Lord according to their intellectual abilities and understanding of their mind. [Just like the case of different people using different examples and comparisons in order to explain how brilliant the sun is, learned sages and seers preach about the Lord in accordance with their own understanding and grasp of the Lord's magnificence and majesty. All of them are true, but at the same time none of them are complete.] (Chanda line no. 3)

The Lord is exceedingly graceful and compassionate; he respects and values the affection and emotions of all his devotees². Thus he cheerfully accepts and appreciates in whichever way and to whatever extent they honour the Lord in their own way, using any types of words and intellectual means that they possess. [The Lord does not make a fuss about the way a devotee praises him, honours and worships him. Every single gesture of the devotee aimed at showing his respect for the Lord is accepted by him with due thanks.] (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 150.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-11 that precede Doha no. 28; (ii) Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326; (iii) Doha no. 336; and (iv) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 136.]

दो०. रामु अमित गुन सागर थाह कि पावड़ कोड़ ।

संतन्ह सन जस किछु सुनेउँ तुम्हहि सुनायउँ सोड़ ॥ ९२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

rāmu amita guna sāgara thāha ki pāva'i kō'i.

santanha sana jasa kichu sunē'um̐ tumhahi sunāya'um̐ sō'i. 92 (a).

Lord Ram is an ocean of countless virtues, how can anyone find his depth (or, how can anyone measure the Lord's astounding virtues and stupendous glories)?

I (Kaagbhusund) have told you (Garud) what little I know by way of hearing from other saints. (Doha no. 92-a)

सो०. भाव बस्य भगवान सुख निधान करुना भवन ।

तजि ममता मद मान भजिअ सदा सीता रवन ॥ ९२ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

bhāva basya bhagavāna sukha nidhāna karunā bhavana.

taji mamatā mada māna bhaji'a sadā sītā ravana. 92 (b).

The Lord (Sri Ram), who is an abode of joy, bliss and happiness as well as a fountain of mercy and compassion, can be won-over by having the virtues of sincere devotion, love and faith.

Therefore, one should abandon all sorts of worldly attachments, ego and pride, and instead, worship and adore Lord Ram, the dear husband of Sita (sītā ravana)¹. (Sortha no. 92-b)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund advises that one should 'worship the dear husband of Sita'. Obviously he means Lord Ram. But the "Ram" he means to be adored and worshipped is the personified form of the Supreme Being, and one should look at Lord Ram with this understanding. Surely and certainly, nothing would be gained spiritually by merely ritualistically worshipping a King of a certain kingdom whose name happened to be 'Ram'. It would be a futile exercise. The real and actual gain would come only when one reveres Lord Ram with a clear understanding that he is the Supreme Being in that form.]

चौ०. सुनि भुसुंडि के बचन सुहाए । हरषित खगपति पंख फुलाए ॥ १ ॥

नयन नीर मन अति हरषाना । श्रीरघुपति प्रताप उर आना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī bhusuṇḍī kē bacana suhā'ē. haraṣita khagapati paṅkha phulā'ē. 1.
nayana nīra mana ati haraṣānā. śrīraghupati pratāpa ura ānā. 2.

Hearing the pleasant and sweet words of Kaagbhusund, the king of the birds (Garud) rejoiced and he was so much euphoric and thrilled that his feathers spread out and became puffed-up. (1)

Tears of joy welled-up in his eyes, and his Mana (mind and heart both) was exceedingly exuberant. He (Garud) meditated upon the glories and the divinity of Lord Ram, and enshrined them in his heart. (2)

पाछिल मोह समुझि पछिताना । ब्रह्म अनादि मनुज करि माना ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि पुनि काग चरन सिरु नावा । जानि राम सम प्रेम बढावा ॥ ४ ॥

pāchila mōha samujhi pachitānā. brahma anādi manuja kari mānā. 3.
puni puni kāga carana siru nāvā. jāni rāma sama prēma baṛhāvā. 4.

When he (Garud) recalled his earlier delusions and doubts about the Lord, he regretted very much that he had gravely erred to think that Brahm, the eternal, infinite and cosmic form of the Supreme Being, is a human being¹. (3)

In order to express his gratitude and reverence, he (Garud) repeatedly bowed his head at the feet of the Crow (Kaagbhusund) for whom he had developed immense respect and affection as he treated him to be equivalent to Lord Ram himself². (4)

[Note—¹Garud was utterly confounded when he saw Lord Ram fighting the war of Lanka like an ordinary human prince. For sometime he forgot that Lord Ram was actually Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who was merely playing the role of a human prince as required by some peculiar circumstances. It was a mirage that created a lot of delusion for Garud. Now that delusion was removed, and he became wisened about the truth and reality of the Lord.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68—to Doha no. 69. Here we have read how Kaagbhusund too had puffed-up feathers and tears of joy in his eyes as he became exhilarated when he realised how the narration of the divine story of Lord Ram had provided immense joy, happiness and contentedness to his listener, Garud.

²The idea here is that a true devotee of the Lord becomes one like the Lord; he is an image of the Lord. From metaphysical perspective too this is true because the living being's true identity, his true 'self', is the Atma and not his physical body, and this Atma of the individual is the same pure Consciousness that exists at the cosmic level and is known as Brahm, which in turn is represented by Lord Ram. Lord Ram therefore is the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being.

Thus, a wise, enlightened and truly self-realised devotee of Lord Ram is indeed equivalent to the Lord himself; he is an image of Lord Ram because his Atma and the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma are the same.

Hence, when spiritual wisdom dawned upon Garud, he began to treat Kaagbhusund, a devotee par-excellence of Lord Ram, reverentially, as being equally respectable and honourable as Lord Ram himself.

Garud's respect and affection for the Crow grew manifold after learning that he has had the rare honour and privilege of staying with Lord Ram for five years and playing with him like a dear friend during the Lord's childhood days, and of being personally blessed by the Lord who had even showed him his cosmic form. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 89.]

गुर बिनु भव निधि तरङ्ग न कोई । जौं बिरंचि संकर सम होई ॥ ५ ॥
संसय सर्प ग्रसेउ मोहि ताता । दुखद लहरि कुतर्क बहु ब्राता ॥ ६ ॥

gura binu bhava nidhi tara'i na kōī. jaum biran̄ci saṅkara sama hōī. 5.
sansaya sarpa grasē'u mōhi tātā. dukhada lahari kutarka bahu brātā. 6.

One cannot cross the formidable ocean symbolised by this gross world consisting of the cycle of birth and death, the world and life of mundane existence, without the help of a Guru (teacher, preceptor and spiritual guide) even if one is as high and mighty and resourceful as Viranchi (the creator Brahma) and Lord Shiva. (5)

[Garud told Kaagbhusund—] My Dear (tātā)! I was bitten by the snake symbolising doubts and delusions. Even as a person bitten by a snake becomes delirious and begins to suffer from waves of fits, overwhelming pain and insurmountable misery, I too was overcome with waves of delusions, doubts and confusions that drowned me in immense grief and sorrows. [I became agitated and emotionally upset. I lost the composure of my mind and the peace of my heart.] (6)

तव सरूप गारुड़ि रघुनायक । मोहि जिआयउ जन सुखदायक ॥ ७ ॥
तव प्रसाद मम मोह नसाना । राम रहस्य अनूपम जाना ॥ ८ ॥

tava sarūpa gāruḍi raghunāyaka. mōhi ji'āya'u jana sukhadāyaka. 7.
tava prasāda mama mōha nasānā. rāma rahasya anūpama jānā. 8.

The Lord of the Raghus (“raghunāyaka”—i.e. Lord Sri Ram) who bestows joy, happiness and delight upon his devotees, followers and dependants (jana sukhadāyaka)¹, has relieved me from my torments and agonies by motivating me to come to a snake charmer in your form (tava sarūpa gāruḍi)². (7)

It is indeed due to your grace and blessings that all my delusions, misconceptions and misgivings have vanished. I have been privileged enough to learn about the profound mystery and gain some insight about the truth and reality of Lord Ram that are exceptional and most esoteric. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 186 where the Gods, including the creator Brahma, have praised Lord Vishnu similarly.]

²Here, the delusions and doubts that had made Garud agitated are the symbolic fits of severe pain and delirium from which a person suffers when he is bitten by a snake. A wise person then advises him to immediately go to a snake charmer who knows the trick by which the horrifying effects of snake bite can be neutralised. Kaagbhusund is that symbolic snake charmer. The antidote that he administered to Garud was the narration of the story of Lord Ram that has the potential to overcome the greatest of spiritual delusions. Once cured of the side effects of snake bite, the patient feels relieved and cheerful; he is highly grateful to his benefactor, the snake charmer. Likewise, here Garud is very obliged and thankful to Kaagbhusund for enlightening him about Lord Ram, and helping him to overcome his doubts and confusions as clearly stated in verse no. 8.]

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PART—3

[Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 93—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 115.]

दो०. ताहि प्रसंसि बिबिधि बिधि सीस नाइ कर जोरि ।
बचन बिनीत सप्रेम मृदु बोलेउ गरुड़ बहोरि ॥ ९३ (क) ॥
dōhā.

tāhi prasansi bibidhi bidhi sīsa nā'i kara jōri.
bacana binīta saprēma mṛdu bōlē'u garuṛa bahōri. 93 (a).

Having lavishly praised Kaagbhusund in various ways, bowing his head reverentially before him, and joining his palms as a gesture of supplication and respect to him, Garud said once again, using most polite and affectionate words --- (Doha no. 93-a)

प्रभु अपने अबिबेक ते बूझउँ स्वामी तोहि ।
कृपासिंधु सादर कहहु जानि दास निज मोहि ॥ ९३ (ख) ॥

prabhu apanē abibēka tē būjha'um' svāmī tōhi.
kṛpāsindhu sādara kahahu jāni dāsa nija mōhi. 93 (b).

‘Oh Lord (“prabhu”—i.e. Kaagbhusund)! It is out of my own lack of knowledge and wisdom that I dare to ask you something.

You are an ocean of mercy and kindness (and I am therefore sure that you will not feel offended at my impertinence). Regard me as your follower and devotee, and be gracious enough to answer my queries (so that all my doubts that still linger in my mind are put to rest). (Doha no. 93-b)

चौ०. तुम्ह सर्वग्य तग्य तम पारा । सुमति सुसील सरल आचारा ॥ १ ॥
ग्यान बिरति बिग्यान निवासा । रघुनायक के तुम्ह प्रिय दासा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

tumha sarbagya tagya tama pārā. sumati susīla sarala ācārā. 1.
gyāna birati bigyāna nivāsā. raghunāyaka kē tumha priya dāsā. 2.

You are all-knowing; nothing is secret or hidden from you (*sarbagya*). You have a transcendental level of wisdom and knowledge (*tagya*), and your mind and intellect are free from the dark taint of delusions and worldly confusions (*tama pārā*).

You are wise and enlightened (*sumati*); you are courteous and virtuous (*susīla*); you are simple, humble and unpretentious (*sarala*); and you have all the goodness of character and righteousness in behaviour (*ācārā*)—that one expects from a great saint, a great sage, and a self-realised soul. (1)

You have Gyan (“*gyāna*”—true spiritual knowledge); you have the virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion (*birati*); and you are an embodiment of the eclectic spiritual virtues of self-realisation and enlightenment (*bigyāna nivāsā*).

And above all (and the crowning glory of all your wonderful virtues is that—) you are a devotee and a follower who is very dear (*priya dāsā*) to Lord Ram (who is also known as “*raghunāyaka*”—the Lord of the line of Kings descending from king Raghu of Ayodhya)¹. (2)

[Note—¹The point to note in this observation is that the other qualities are possessed by many acclaimed sages, seers and saints, but it is rare that someone would become dear to Lord Ram. It is one thing to love Lord Ram, and another thing when the person is loved by the Lord himself. Obviously, the latter type of person who is loved by the Supreme Being himself is definitely and surely the most privileged, and extremely fortunate and blessed.

To understand why and how a devotee who is loved by Lord Ram is more fortunate than others, let us take a simple example from the ordinary world. If a king of a place favours one of his numerous subjects and treats him with special attention as compared to others, inspite of the fact that this favoured person is most ordinary and may even be low down in the rung of social hierarchy, is this person not extraordinarily lucky? Of course, if the king is a nice ruler, considerate, merciful, kind and gracious, all his subjects will adore him and love him. The king in turn would also love all his subjects equally, but if he shows special affection for a certain person in the kingdom though that person is most humble, is he not very fortunate to have a special place in the heart of the realm’s sovereign? Surely there must be something unique in this person which has endeared him to the king, though that unique and special quality may be so subtle that it is not usually possible for others to realise what it is and its value for the king.

The same thing applies to Kaagbhusund here. Surely he had some extraordinary virtues in him, or an ordinary-looking virtue on the face but which he had refined to its highest purity that was so remarkable that Lord Ram loved him more specially.]

कारन कवन देह यह पाई । तात सकल मोहि कहहु बुझाई ॥ ३ ॥
राम चरित सर सुंदर स्वामी । पायहु कहाँ कहहु नभगामी ॥ ४ ॥

kārana kavana dēha yaha pā'ī. tāta sakala mōhi kahahu bujhā'ī. 3.
rāma carita sara sundara svāmī. pāyahu kahām' kahahu nabhagāmī. 4.

My Dear (tāta)! Tell me why you came to have this body (of a crow). Please explain to me everything concerning it¹. (3)

And besides this, oh Lord Bird (“svāmī -- nabhagāmī”—literally, the one who can travel in the sky, obviously meaning a ‘bird’), the other question that I have is: From where did you find the wonderful and beautiful symbolic ‘lake’ that is filled with the nectar of spiritual bliss and joy provided by Ram Charit Manas, the divine, sacred and holy story that describes the life, time and deeds of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, during his sojourn on earth as a human being (rāma carita sara)²? (4)

[Note—¹Garud wondered: “I am absolutely confounded as to why you became a ‘crow’ out of all forms of living beings—in spite of all your wonderful virtues, and you being so favoured by Lord Ram. It’s astonishing that a sage of your exalted stature should be condemned to be crow because this form of the body is not very respectable by any means. I can’t understand the reason for this inconsistency—that a great soul like you would become a lowly crow instead of having some other form that would have been in line with your exalted spiritual stature. So please be gracious and kind to shed more light on the two questions I have asked you.”

²The way Garud addressed Kaagbhusund is remarkable. He calls Kaagbhusund as a “nabhagāmī”—one who can move through the sky like a bird. To clarify that he means no insult to Kaagbhusund, he has also used the word ‘Lord’ (svāmī) for him.

Then he likens Ram Charit Manas to a beautiful ‘lake’ (rāma carita sara). Well, when a bird flies high in the sky, it is able to see a large area of tract of land below. It sees many rivers, lakes, ponds etc. as it traverses through the sky. Such a panoramic view is not possible by a land-bound creature. The bird stops at many rivers and lakes to refresh during its flight. So it has the chance to taste the waters of countless water bodies. Then some lucky bird would discover a lake full of the crystal clear water.

In spiritual context, the beautiful lake that contains the ambrosia of life which Kaagbhusund discovered is in the form of the divine, sacred and holy story of Lord Ram that is known as Ram Charit.

Garud means that so many great sages and seers have been searching a source of spiritual bliss and joy down the ages, but it was Kaagbhusund who discovered it in the form of Ram Charit. So Garud wished to know how he managed to find it.

In practical terms, this is what may have happened in that ancient period of time: Kaagbhusund was a crow by his physical body, though he was a highly self-

realised, spiritually enlightened and a wise soul, one who was a kindred spirit who could distinguish between his gross body which was his ‘non-true self’, and his pure conscious Atma that was his ‘true self’. Though he was a crow by birth, he did not live like an ordinary bird engaged in the routine affairs of life in this mundane world, and instead chose to lead a life like that of a hermit and an ascetic, a life of meditation, penance and austerities, a peaceful and serene life in the upper reaches of the Himalayas, the mountain range where great sages and seers went to get spiritual solace and peace, surrounded by the calmness and the beauty of Nature.

Being a ‘bird’, Kaagbhusund could fly high in the sky, and this was a boon for him for he used to soar high and glide in the sky above the mountain range in search of places where he would find some great sage or hermit observing spiritual practices so that he could pay his obeisance to him and draw inspiration. Once upon a time he happened to fly atop Mt. Kailash on the bank of the pristine pure lake known as Mansarovar. This place is said to be the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva where the Lord dwelt with Parvati. Seeing the lake of calm and crystal clear water, Kaagbhusund descended to take a dip in it and freshen himself, and to his amazement he discovered that Lord Shiva was telling some esoteric story to his consort Parvati somewhere nearby. So he quietly sat down and listened attentively. Shiva observed him but did not shoo him away as the Lord found that Kaagbhusund was very focused in his attention and was listening to the rendering of this holy and divine with all the signs of devotion and love for it, such as he had tears in his eyes, his ears stood on their ends so as to not miss a single word, his face glowed with joy and delight, and his his body was so thrilled that his feathers stood on their ends.

Thus, the nomenclature ‘Ram Charit Sara’ honours the ‘lake’ called Mansarovar on the banks of which Kaagbhusund had heard this divine and blessed story of Lord Ram known as ‘Ram Charit’ that is spiritually liberating and a provider of bliss and freedom from all the sufferance to which a creature is subjected to in life in this mundane mortal world.]

नाथ सुना मैं अस सिव पाहीं । महा प्रलयहुँ नास तव नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
मुधा बचन नहिं ईस्वर कहई । सोउ मोरें मन संसय अहई ॥ ६ ॥

nātha sunā mair̥m asa siva pāhīm̐. mahā pralayahum̐ nāsa tava nāhīm̐. 5.
mudhā bacana nahim̐ īsvara kaha'ī. sō'u mōrēm̐ mana sansaya aha'ī. 6.

Oh Lord (nātha)! I have heard from Lord Shiva that you do not perish even during the Great Deluge of the Dooms-day (mahā pralayahum̐)¹. (5)

The Lord God (“īsvara”—i.e. Lord Shiva) does not speak a lie, so this has perplexed me and has created a doubt in my mind. [Why? The reason is given in the next verse herein below.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 57. The same idea is expressed in (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 96.]

अग जग जीव नाग नर देवा । नाथ सकल जगु काल कलेवा ॥ ७ ॥
अंड कटाह अमित लय कारी । कालु सदा दुरतिक्रम भारी ॥ ८ ॥

aga jaga jīva nāga nara dēvā. nātha sakala jagu kāla kalēvā. 7.
aṇḍa kaṭāha amita laya kārī. kālu sadā duratikrama bhārī. 8.

Oh Lord (nātha)! This is because all the creatures in this mortal world, whether they are the Nagas (pronounced as “Nāgās”; subterranean creatures; literally the serpents), the human beings (no matter how exalted, resourceful, powerful and mighty they are), the gods (of heaven who are deemed to be eternal because they have a very long life as compared to the human race), and all other denominations of creatures, movable and immovable (such as animals and plants respectively)—all of them are devoured by Death; none of them is spared by the Jaws of Time; all invariably become a victim of Kaal (sakala jagu kāla kalēvā). (7)

The factor of Kaal (the effects of time and circumstance; death, decay and destruction; end or conclusion of life) is so formidable and invincible that it spares none—it annihilates and destroys countless and the greatest of universes.

[To wit, I just can’t understand how you become immune to the laws of Kaal; how you managed to escape its clutches when it spares none?] (8)

सो०. तुम्हहि न व्यापत काल अति कराल कारन कवन ।
मोहि सो कहहु कृपाल ग्यान प्रभाव कि जोग बल ॥ ९४ (क) ॥
sōraṭhā.

tumhahi na byāpata kāla ati karāla kārana kavana.
mōhi sō kahahu krpāla gyāna prabhāva ki jōga bala. 94 (a).

What is the reason that Kaal (the effects of time and circumstances; death, decay and destruction) does not prevail upon you, it does not affect you though it is extremely cruel and invincible as well as unsparing and unforgiving by its inherent nature¹.

Oh merciful Lord, please tell me what is the reason for you having this immunity from Kaal—is it due to the protective shield of the stupendous spiritual wisdom and knowledge that you have, or is this immunity obtained by you on the strength of Tapa (austerity and penance) that you do? (Sortha no. 94-a)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 96.]

दो०. प्रभु तव आश्रम आएँ मोर मोह भ्रम भाग ।
कारन कवन सो नाथ सब कहहु सहित अनुराग ॥ ९४ (ख) ॥
dōhā.

prabhu tava āśrama ā'ēm̐ mōra mōha bhrama bhāga.
kāraṇa kavana sō nātha saba kahahu sahita anurāga. 94 (b).

When I came to your lordship's hermitage, all my delusions and confusions ran away (vanished) automatically on their own¹.

Oh Lord (nātha)! Be kind and affectionate towards me and tell me the reason for it. [Please be kind to explain to me why I had experienced these wonderful and amazing phenomena.]' (Doha no. 94-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64. It is just like the case of darkness immediately vanishing with the appearance of any source of light, for example a candle or the sun. The presence of the saintly soul Kaagbhusund endowed the hermitage with a positively charged environment of spiritualism and holiness that would instantly neutralise all the negative things that may come near it, such as delusions and confusions.]

चौ०. गरुड़ गिरा सुनि हरषेउ कागा । बोलेउ उमा परम अनुरागा ॥ १ ॥
धन्य धन्य तव मति उरगारी । प्रस्न तुम्हारि मोहि अति प्यारी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

garuṇa girā suni haraṣē'u kāgā. bōlē'u umā parama anurāgā. 1.
dhan'ya dhan'ya tava mati uragārī. prasna tumhāri mōhi ati pyārī. 2.

[Continuing his narration to his consort Uma, Lord Shiva told said to her—] “Listen Uma, when the Crow (Kaagbhusund) heard the words of Garud, he felt exhilarated. He (Kaagbhusund) replied very affectionately --- (1),

‘Oh the Enemy of Serpents (uragārī)! You are blessed, and so is your intellect. I love to hear your question; it has pleased me a lot. [And therefore I shall answer them cheerfully and willingly.]’¹ (2)

[Note—¹This is the reason why Kaagbhusund felt exhilarated when Garud posed his questions to him, and this is also the reason why he is ready to answer them cheerfully and affectionately. Why was Kaagbhusund so happy to hear Garud ask him about the source of his eternity?

It made Kaagbhusund nostalgic; he recollected some glorious events of his past life that filled him with joy and reminded him how blessed he had been.]

सुनि तव प्रस्न सप्रेम सुहाई । बहुत जनम कै सुधि मोहि आई ॥ ३ ॥
सब निज कथा कहउँ मैं गाई । तात सुनहु सादर मन लाई ॥ ४ ॥

sunī tava prasna saprēma suhāī. bahuta janama kai sudhi mōhi āī. 3.
saba nija kathā kaha'um̐ maiṁ gāī. tāta sunahu sādara mana lāī. 4.

After hearing your question asked most politely and affectionately, I have recollected the events of many of my past lives. [And this has thrilled me and made me nostalgic.] (3)

Well now, I shall tell you all about my history in detail. Oh Dear (tāta)! Listen to it attentively, with due respect and regard¹. (4)

[Note—¹It's interesting to note that Kaagbhusund has asked Garud to hear about the former's life with 'due respect and regard'. He means to warn Garud not to take it lightly and be sceptical about its truthfulness. The story may seem a bit odd and unconventional, so it should not be mocked at and ridiculed, for it is true and real, and no cock-and-bull self-praise story of wild imagination! Showing disrespect to it would be tantamount to showing doubt to Kaagbhusund, the honourable preacher, and to Lord Ram as well because the story about Kaagbhusund's past inherently incorporates the glory and greatness of the Lord in it.]

जप तप मख सम दम ब्रत दाना । बिरति बिबेक जोग बिग्याना ॥ ५ ॥

सब कर फल रघुपति पद प्रेमा । तेहि बिनु कोउ न पावइ छेमा ॥ ६ ॥

japa tapa makha sama dama brata dānā. birati bibēka jōga bigyānā. 5.
saba kara phala raghupati pada prēmā. tēhi binu kō'u na pāva'i chēmā. 6.

Doing various and myriads of meritorious deeds and practicing so many religious exercises such as Japa (repetition of holy Mantras which are esoteric spiritual formulas, or muttering of prayers), Tapa (penance; austerity), Yagya (fire sacrifices), Sama and Dama (practicing equanimity and self-control of the mind and the sense organs), Vrat (observing strict sacred vows and religious restrictions), Daan (making charity; donation; giving of alms), Virati or Vairagya (renunciation; detachment; dispassion), Vivek (wisdom, right thinking and judgement, discrimination), Yoga (meditation, reflection and contemplation), Vigyan (spiritual wisdom and enlightenment), and all other such practices and observances --- (5),

--- The only worthwhile eclectic reward, the only worthwhile spiritual merit and the only worthwhile mystical benefit that accrue to a person by doing countless auspicious deeds and undertaking various religious or spiritual exercises as enumerated above, is only one—and it is have affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram.

[To wit, if a person fails to develop affection, devotion and faith in the holy feet of Lord Ram then all the exercises listed herein above go to waste.]

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, one cannot have any worthwhile merit nor attain any gain by way of liberation and deliverance without having faith, devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 85; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 119; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 7-19 that precede Doha no. 122]

एहिं तन राम भगति मैं पाई । ताते मोहि ममता अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥
जेहि तें कछु निज स्वारथ होई । तेहि पर ममता कर सब कोई ॥ ८ ॥

ēhim tana rāma bhagati mair̥m pā'ī. tātē mōhi mamatā adhikā'ī. 7.
jēhi tēm kachu nija svāratha hō'ī. tēhi para mamatā kara saba kō'ī. 8.

I was fortunate and lucky to have gained access to the glorious virtue of Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Ram with this body (of a crow), and this is why I am so fond of it; this is why I prefer it over other better forms that the soul can assume in this world¹. (7)

Anything by which one derives some special benefit and attains one's cherished objective in life naturally becomes dear to him.

[To wit, since I got the fruit of having Bhakti for Lord Ram with this body of a crow, I began to respect it and prefer it over all other forms my soul could have assumed.]² (8)

[Note—¹It is clearly mentioned by Kaagbhusund that he was blessed by Lord Ram himself with the virtue of having Bhakti when he had gone in the form of a crow to play with the Lord during his childhood days. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 89.

Since he attained nearness with his beloved Lord with the body of a crow, as well as was blessed in this form of a crow, he became very fond of this form.

²As we move ahead with the reading of the past lives of Kaagbhusund, we shall see that in one of his previous lives he was a human being, but he wasn't blessed by the virtue of Bhakti for Lord Ram then. He was blessed with this boon only when he became a crow. So therefore, Kaagbhusund decided that the body of a crow was most useful for him as he had developed Bhakti for Lord Ram with this body.

Further, as we have already read earlier, it was in the form of a crow that Kaagbhusund could have unrestricted access to Lord Ram and play with the Lord when he was a child. He hopped around the Lord and stayed for five long years to enjoy the Lord's company as no one suspected who he actually was as everyone thought that the child Ram had become fond of a crow with which he wanted to play. So no one in the palace chased the crow away. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 89.

Had Kaagbhusund been a human or any other form that is regarded as better and more honourable as compared to being a crow which is a contemptible bird, this privilege of being able to play and keep close company with Lord Ram for five long years without being asked to leave would not have been possible at all.]

सो०. पन्नगारि असि नीति श्रुति संमत सज्जन कहहिं ।

अति नीचहु सन प्रीति करिअ जानि निज परम हित ॥ ९५ (क) ॥

sōraṭhā.

pannagāri asi nīti śruti sammata sajjana kahahim.
ati nīcahu sana prīti kari'a jāni nija parama hita. 95 (a).

Oh Enemy of Serpents (“pannagāri”—i.e. Garud)! It is a well established maxim of the Vedas and even those who are wise and prudent in the world have endorsed the view that one should be courteous towards and show affection for even the meanest and the lowliest of creatures in the world if it is found that friendship with the latter serves one's own interest and purpose¹. (Sortha no. 95-a)

[Note—¹As we move along in the reading of the text of Ram Charit Manas we come across many such priceless gems of wisdom and prudent advice embedded in its text that would stand in good stead in our personal lives. Presently this maxim and axiom is of great practical value for all of us in our dealings with others in the humdrum world, and it would come handy when we are faced with a situation where we are not certain whether or not to befriend a particular person. The guiding principle is to see if having relations with the opposite party would serve our interests, and if the answer is ‘yes’ then other things such as his social standing, cast, creed, beliefs, ethnicity and other such things can be put aside. Say, what good is a person who is of a high stature and may possess excellent qualities if he is of no help to us when we face adversities and need a true friend to give us support?

This is the reason why Lord Ram had willingly befriended monkeys and bears of Kishkindha, as well as even the brother of his demon enemy (i.e. Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, who had abducted the Lord's wife Sita) though they were not upto the standard that would qualify them for becoming friends with the Lord: all of them had whole-heartedly helped Lord Ram to successfully complete his mission of finding Sita and releasing her from her captors.

Another thing we learn from the example of Lord Ram is that when such lowly and humble creatures come to someone's aid in times of adversities and need, then that person should always remain obliged and grateful to his benefactors, and not be selfish to turn his back as soon as the objective of creating friendship is fulfilled.

Lord Ram did not hesitate or feel shy to bring his friends such as the monkeys, the bears and even the deomon represented by Vibhishan to his capital of Ayodhya when he came back after the fourteen years of forest sojourn, to openly acknowledge their help and contribution to his mission of vanquishing the cruel demons, and to declare that they are all his dear friends and as dear to him as his own brother Bharat who was extremely dear to the Lord as he had even forgone the chance to ascend the throne of Ayodhya in the absence of the Lord inspite of the fact that every single minister of the kingdom has insisted that he should.]

पाट कीट तें होइ तेहि तें पाटंबर रुचिर ।

कृमि पालइ सबु कोइ परम अपावन प्रान सम ॥ ९५ (ख) ॥

pāṭa kīṭa tēm hō'i tēhi tēm pāṭambara rucira.
kṛmi pāla'i sabu kō'i parama apāvana prāna sama. 95 (b).

The silk thread is produced by a silk-worm which is by all means a lowly creature, not someone of a high stature and worthy of praise that people would feel pride to befriend. But since it produces a fine thing called ‘silk’ from which exceptionally

beautiful and valuable clothes are made, the humble worm is coveted and feted by all, it is liked by everyone, it is dear to all like one would love one's own life, and no one deems it to be contemptible and treats it with disdain simply because it is a lowly and ugly 'worm'. (Sotha no. 95-b)

चौ०. स्वारथ साँच जीव कहूँ एहा । मन क्रम बचन राम पद नेहा ॥ १ ॥
 सोड़ पावन सोड़ सुभग सरीरा । जो तनु पाइ भजिअ रघुबीरा ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

svāratha sām̐ca jīva kahum̐ ēhā. mana krama bacana rāma pada nēhā. 1.
 sō'i pāvana sō'i subhaga sarīrā. jō tanu pā'i bhaji'a raghubīrā. 2.

{Now, what is the real or true self-interest of a living being? This is answered here—}

The real and true self-interest of all the Jivas (living beings) lies in cultivating, developing and promoting the virtue of having affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram¹ by employing all the faculties and functions of the body which are under one's command—i.e. by employing one's Mana (mind and heart combine), by doing Karma (auspicious deeds that are conducive to a person's well-being) and Bachan (words and speech—by way of praising the Lord, spreading his glories and values, and advising others to lead an auspicious spiritual way of life devoted to the Lord). (1)

That physical body of a Jiva is deemed to be good, praise-worthy and charming by which the Jiva is able to worship, adore and revere Lord Raghubir (i.e. Lord Ram), by which he can develop devotion and affection for the Lord². (2)

[Note—¹Having affection for the august feet of Lord Ram also includes in its ambit such virtues as having devotion, faith and belief in the Lord and his divinity and holiness.

These virtues serve a Jiva's true and real self-interest as they give his soul spiritual peace and bliss that has depth in it; they make available to him the eclectic spiritual reward in the form of finding liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of miseries and torments characteristic of this mundane world.

On the other hand, loving the world and its material things give joy that is only superficial in nature, for all joys and comforts derived from the gross world are as transient as the world itself. They only entangle the creature in a web of miseries and sufferings that would actually rob whatever traces of happiness and peace that the creature already has.

²To wit, even if a creature has got a most lowly form of body, say for instance like that of a crow as in the case of Kaagbhusund himself, but still he is able to develop devotion and love for Lord Ram through this body, then it is worth to have it as it becomes an instrument for attaining eternal peace, bliss and joy for the creature's soul; it becomes a vehicle by which the Jiva can find liberation and deliverance for its soul.

Here, when a reference is made to the living being, his 'true self called the Atma' is being meant. This Atma is the 'true self' and the 'soul' of all living beings. The Atma is pure consciousness that lives inside the gross physical body of a creature.

Hence, that ‘gross body’ which helps the creature to do something that would help to free its Atma from the trap in which it has found itself is the creature’s “true friend”. And like a ‘true friend’, the creature loves such a body, though otherwise this body may be, on its surface, unholy and not worthy of any praise.

As we see in the case of Kaagbhusund, he loves to have a physical body of a ‘crow’ as he has found the spiritual nectar by way of devotion and love for Lord God through the means of the body of a crow, no matter how lowly, contemptible and unholy it may be otherwise.

The importance of Bhakti and its significance for the spiritual welfare of a creature has been stressed by Kaagbhusund elsewhere also during his conversation with Garud which is in the form of a spiritual discourse. For instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 85; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 119; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-19 that precede Doha no. 122.]

राम बिमुख लहि बिधि सम देही । कबि कोबिद न प्रसंसहिं तेही ॥ ३ ॥
राम भगति एहिं तन उर जामी । ताते मोहि परम प्रिय स्वामी ॥ ४ ॥

rāma bimukha lahi bidhi sama dēhī. kabi kōbida na prasansahim tēhī. 3.
rāma bhagati ēhim tana ura jāmi. tātē mōhi parama priya svāmī. 4.

If a Jiva (living being) accepts a grand body which is as majestic, exalted and exceptional in qualities as that possessed by Vidhi (i.e. the senior most of the Trinity of Gods, the creator Brahma, the writer of the Vedas and all the laws governing this creation), but if that body is opposed to Lord Ram (i.e. it does not have devotion, affection, faith and reverence for Lord Ram, it does not worship the Lord and offers obeisance to him)—then those who have spiritual wisdom and are enlightened do not praise such a body (in spite of its greatness and majesty, and its possession of other virtues and qualities)¹. (3)

Oh Lord (“svāmī”—i.e. Garud)! Since the glorious and eclectic spiritual virtues of devotion, affection, reverence and faith for Lord Ram (rāma bhagati) sprouted in this body of mine (which externally is like that of a ‘crow’), I am very fond of it; it is very dear to me². (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 86 where precisely the same thing is said.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 95; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 85.

Kaagbhusund, the saintly ‘crow’, had gone to play with Lord Ram during the Lord’s childhood days. The Lord was very pleased with him and had blessed him with the virtue of having eternal ‘Bhakti’ (devotion) for the Lord at that time. So, Kaagbhusund says that he is very fond of his present body of a ‘crow’.]

तजउँ न तन निज इच्छा मरना । तन बिनु बेद भजन नहिँ बरना ॥ ५ ॥
 प्रथम मोहँ मोहि बहुत बिगोवा । राम बिमुख सुख कबहुँ न सोवा ॥ ६ ॥

taja'um̃ na tana nija icchā maranā. tana binu bēda bhajana nahir̃m baranā. 5.
 prathama mōham̃ mōhi bahuta bigōvā. rāma bimukha sukha kabahum̃ na
 sōvā. 6.

It is upon me to decide when I shall die (as Lord Ram has blessed me with an eternal life)¹, but still I don't want to discard this body of a 'crow' because the Vedas have asserted that one cannot physically worship and offer obeisance to Lord Ram without a physical body². (5)

Earlier, Moha (worldly attachments and infatuations; delusions in all its myriad manifestations) had had the better of me; it made me hallucinate and subjected me to a lot of horrors and miseries so much so that I had become virtually opposed or hostile to Lord Ram. The result was highly agonising for me and I could not even sleep in peace (i.e. I found no rest and succour from my troubles and tribulations)³. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88 where Lord Ram has granted this boon to Kaagbhusund.

²To wit, since it is not possible to worship, to offer obeisance and prayer to, and to sing the glories of Lord Ram and to have devotion for the Lord without the aid of a physical body, I need to have a body so that I am able to derive immense spiritual joy, pleasure and comfort by practicing these things. That is why I prefer not to die and shed this body of a 'crow' though it is not a holy form for the soul to have and neither is it praise worthy by any account.

³Kaagbhusund would narrate the woes of his earlier lives in the following verses. Before becoming a crow due to a curse, he was a human being, and prior to that he had gone through the evolutionary process by taking many births and having many bodies. But he had never found spiritual peace, joy and bliss like he has found now when he is a crow.

This narration is given below from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 96 herein below—to Doha no. 114.]

नाना जनम कर्म पुनि नाना । किए जोग जप तप मख दाना ॥ ७ ॥
 कवन जोनि जनमेउँ जहँ नाही । मैं खगोस भ्रमि भ्रमि जग माहीं ॥ ८ ॥

nānā janama karma puni nānā. ki'ē jōga japa tapa makha dānā. 7.
 kavana jōni janamē'um̃ jaham̃ nāhīr̃m. mair̃m khagēsa bhrami bhrami jaga
 māhīr̃m. 8.

In my countless previous births I had done myriads of spiritual practices such as Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of holy Mantras or formulas and prayers), Tapa (austerity and penance), Yagya (fire sacrifices) and Daan (charity)¹. (7)

Which is that form or body that I had not taken birth in during my aimless wonderings in this mortal world of transmigration²? I had wondered in all the possible wombs (i.e. I had taken births in all possible forms that a living being can have in this world), and in each birth I remained mired in delusions that caused so much perplexities, doubts and confusions for me that I could never overcome them and remained perpetually trapped in this cycle. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 95.

²I had repeatedly died and taken birth in a new form as a Jiva, a creature or a living being with a gross mortal body. Each of my new form or birth was determined by the fiat of destiny, and the decision as to the sort of creature I would become in my next birth was influenced by the consequences of the deeds that I had done in my previous life before I died. In this way, I had travelled a long journey through all possible forms that exist in this world.]

देखेउँ करि सब करम गोसाईं । सुखी न भयउँ अबहिं की नाई ॥ ९ ॥
सुधि मोहि नाथ जन्म बहु केरी । सिव प्रसाद मति मोहँ न घेरी ॥ १० ॥

dēkhē'um' kari saba karama gōsā'īm. sukhī na bhaya'um' abahim kī nā'īm. 9.
sudhi mōhi nātha janma bahu kērī. siva prasāda mati mōham' na ghērī. 10.

Oh my Lord (“gōsā'īm”—i.e. Garud)! I have seen everything that is to be seen; I have done all possible deeds and taken all necessary actions in order to find peace for myself, but I failed miserably every time. I had never been as delighted, cheerful, blissful, joyous and happy as I am now (in the body of a crow)¹. (9)

Oh Lord (nātha)! I have a memory of many of my previous births (and I can vividly recall how unhappy I had been then) because, by the grace of Lord Shiva, my memory and understanding remained sharp, and my mind could not be clouded by forgetfulness and delirium². (10)

[Note—¹Why is it so? Kaagbhusund has himself answered this question in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 95—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 96.

It is because he has been blessed by the glorious virtue of having Bhakti for Lord Ram in his body of a crow. This single boon has provided him extreme solace, peace, joy, happiness, bliss, felicity and beatitude like he has never had before in any of his previous births.

²To wit, by Lord Shiva's grace and kindness, I have been blessed with a transcendental level of knowledge that enables me to know the events of my past lives. The great benefit of this knowledge of hindsight is that it keeps me warned of the danger of falling into the trap of worldly delusions and getting tempted by the illusionary joys, happiness, pleasures and comforts of the world. This knowledge of my sufferings of previous births helps me to remain focussed in my spiritual pursuit by not deviating from my path of Bhakti for Lord Ram. It prevents me from getting

attracted to and entangled by the world of sense objects and its illusionary charms. I know how I had been tormented all along in my previous lives when all my attempts to find peace yielded no result. But now this single element of ‘Bhakti’ has bestowed immense bliss and contentedness to me.]

दो०. प्रथम जन्म के चरित अब कहउँ सुनहु बिहगेस ।
सुनि प्रभु पद रति उपजइ जातें मिटहिं कलेस ॥ ९६ (क) ॥
dōhā.

prathama janma kē carita aba kaha'um̐ sunahu bihagēsa.
suni prabhu pada rati upaja'i jātēm miṭahim kalēsa. 96 (a).

Oh the King of Birds (“bihagēsa”—i.e. Garud)! Listen, now I shall tell you about the events of my first life. Hearing these events creates a natural sense of affection and dearness for the holy feet of the Lord (Sri Ram), and this in turn erases all sorts of miseries and torments that afflict a creature. (Doha no. 96-a)

पूरुब कल्प एक प्रभु जुग कलिजुग मल मूल ।
नर अरु नारि अधर्म रत सकल निगम प्रतिकूल ॥ ९६ (ख) ॥

pūruba kalpa ēka prabhu juga kalijuga mala mūla.
nara aru nāri adharma rata sakala nigama pratikūla. 96 (b).

Oh Lord (prabhu)! In the previous Kalpa (one round or circle of creation and destruction) there was an age known as ‘Kaliyug’¹. This age or era was characterised by a high level of perversion, lack of scruples, all-pervading sinfulness, vices and evil tendencies, moral turpitude, degradation and degeneration, and other such corrupt practices that overwhelmed all the creatures and became the dominant characteristic feature of all sorts of behaviour, attitude, thought and conduct during this period. All the men and women were not only highly sinful but were opposed to the Vedas as well, and they were averse to following the righteous and auspicious path shown by the scriptures. (Doha no. 96-b)

[Note—¹The cycle of creation, its development and final conclusion, known as a Kalpa, goes on and on endlessly. Each Kalpa is divided into four segments—Sata-Yug, Treta-Yug, Dwapar-Yug and Kaliyug. The Sata Yug was the period when ‘truth and righteousness’ were the dominant factors. It was the age of the Vedas and fire sacrifices. The fire destroys all impurities, even impure gold is put in the fire to purify it, so the practice of doing fire sacrifices was symbolic of this philosophy. The factor of ‘Dharma’—symbolising the grand virtues of truthfulness, auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility of thought and conduct—was the dominant element in Sata Yug.

Besides the factor of Dharma, there was another measuring scale by which the ancient sages and seers marked the end of one Yug and the beginning of the next Yug—it was the level of the ‘Three Gunas’ or virtues, attitude and characters that

determined the behaviour and working of all creatures in a particular era known as Yug. These three Gunas are called 'Sata Guna', 'Raja Guna' and 'Tama Guna'.

The 'Sata Guna' has the elements of truthfulness, righteousness and auspiciousness as the dominant factor. It is the brightest and the holiest of all the three Gunas, and is characterised by all that is good, divine and sublime. The last of the three Gunas, i.e. the 'Tama Guna', as the name itself suggests, is marked by 'darkness and grossness' symbolising all the worst of negative traits that a creature can ever possess. The second Guna, i.e. the 'Raja Guna' lies in between; it has a mixture of the characters of the Sata Guna and the Tama Guna in varying proportions. The greater is the component of Sata Guna, the better is the creature that possesses the Raja Guna; the greater is the component of Tama Guna, the worse is the creature. The Raja Guna motivates the creature to do his job in this world, and how he does it and his take on it depends upon the ratio of the other two Gunas as they mix with the Raja Guna.

The two factors of 'Dharma' and 'Gunas' together determine in practice which Yug a particular time in the cycle of Kalpa is being referred to.

As time passed, the element of Dharma began to fade away or decline in a step-by-step manner, and its place was taken by 'A-Dharma', the opposite of Dharma. Similarly, the Sata Guna was gradually replaced by the Tama Guna, and so the Raja Guna also underwent change from its best to its worst. This transition was very subtle and gradual over a long period of time spreading centuries.

Therefore, when Dharma and Gunas reached a certain point, the end of Sata Yug came, and it was the beginning of the next era known as Treta Yug. As compared to Sata Yug, Dharma and Sata Guna were weaker in Treta Yug, but they were still stronger and more widespread as compared to the period of time when Treta ended and the third era known as Dwapar took over. So the decline and the downward slide of moral values and upholding of Truth continued unabated till we come to the point where Dwapar ended and the fourth era of Kaliyug took over.

By this gradual progression, a time would come when Dharma would become totally eclipsed and among the three Gunas it would be Tama Guna that would rule the roost. There would be widespread perversion, evil, sins, selfishness, short-sightedness, corruption etc. that would cause irreparable damage and destruction to the society and its moral fibre. Moral values and spiritual principles would be buried underground. The environment would be so polluted that it would make life horrifying to live, and natural resources would be so much exploited and depleted to such an extent that the earth won't be able to support life any longer. Metaphorically, it would be end of one Kalpa, and also the end of Kaliyug, the age in which we humans now live.

Remember: There was no physical demarcation line between any two Yugs; the change was gradual and almost imperceptible. Our ancient sages and seers decided to mark the end of one era and begin the calendar for the next era based on some yardstick or criterion to measure the level or quantum of Dharma and Gunas in a particular era.

There is a simple way to visualise how the Kalpa was divided into four Yugs. We have already read that the Kalpa represents a 'cycle' of creation, development and conclusion. Let us take the example of the 'moon' to understand the concept of the Kalpa and the four Yugs. Let us consider the rounded circular disc of the moon as being equivalent to a 'Kalpa'. The 'full moon' is bright and luminescent—and it resembles the purity and holiness of the Sata Yug. As the nights pass, this brightness and luminescence begin to diminish gradually. When 'one quarter' of the bright disc

of the moon gets hidden from view, it is like the beginning of the 'Treta Yug'. When the brightness of the moon's disc is reduced to a half, it is like the beginning of the 'Dwapar Yug'. And finally, when the last quarter of its brightness survives, it is like the beginning of the 'Kaliyug'.

Obviously, the last quarter of shining surface of the rounded disc of the moon is definitely dark and gloomy as compared to time when its disc was half bright. Similarly, the three-quarters of the bright disc cannot match the beauty and shine of the moon when its full disc is glowing with a bright and luminescent light.

Now, by-and-by the moon becomes completely dark and invisible. Then as if by magic it makes its appearance once again in the sky as if emerging from the dark void of the cosmos.

This analogy of the moon's disc changing in brightness, from the full moon to the new moon, would help one to understand how one round of life known as the Kalpa is divided into four segments called the Yugs depending upon the proportion of Dharma and Guna in it, and then how a new Kalpa starts at the end of the previous Kalpa after passage of some time.

Let us read a bit more about the celestial system of Measurement of Time and age that are classified into the four Yugs, the Kalpa and the Manvantar. References: (i) Vishnu Puran, Chapter 2, Canto 8, verse nos. 60-68; (ii) Tripadvibhut Maha-Naryan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, paragraph nos. 8, 10-15.

(a) 1 *Kalpa* is equivalent to 1 day in the creator Brahma's total life span of 100 years. Each Kalpa consists of 1000 four-Yug cycles, called the 'Chatur Yugs'. The visible creation's one life-span consisting of this four-Yog cycle called the 'Chatur Yugs' is this one day of Brahma. At the end of this Chatur Yug, there would be dissolution or the so-called 'dooms-day' when everything would be submerged in water. Then the next phase of life consisting of the next four-Yug cycle would start.

(b) Each Kalpa (i.e. 1 day of Brahma's life) is also divided into 14 *Manvantars*, and each such Manvantars is ruled by one Manu, the first male. Therefore, 1 Manu rules over 71.42 (1000/4) four-Yug cycles.

We are now passing through the 51st year of Brahma's life, and our present Kaliyug belongs to the 7th Manvantar out of the 14 Manvantars, and its Manu is called Vaivasvata, and it is 28th Kaliyug of the four-Yug cycle.

In human years, 1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion (4.32×10^9) years.

(c) Each 4-era cycle consists of the following *Yugs*—

(1) The *Satayug* is the first era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction. It is also called *Krityug* because elaborate rituals of fire sacrifices based on the Vedas were done during this phase, and hence it is often called the era of great Vedic fire sacrifices. It is equivalent to 4800 divine years of Gods, and 17,28,000 human years.

(2) The *Tretayug* is equivalent to 3600 divine years of Gods, and 12,96,000 human years. It is second era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction. It was during this Yug that Lord Ram manifested on earth as an incarnation of Vishnu, and it concluded when the Lord left the earth for his heavenly abode.

(3) The *Dwaparyug* is equivalent to 2400 divine years of Gods, and 8,64,000 human years. It is third era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction. It was during this Yug that Lord Krishna manifested on earth as an incarnation of Vishnu, and it concluded when the Lord left the earth for his heavenly abode.

(4) The *Kaliyug* is equivalent to 1200 divine years of Gods, and 4,32,000 human years. It is the current fourth era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and

destruction. Out of it, roughly 5000-5500 years have elapsed. It would ultimately end with the great deluge or Domsday when the entire world would be drowned/submerged in water of the rising ocean.

The next Kalpa would come after that in cyclic form. This happens because at the fag end of Kaliyug, sins and evils would have reached such a crescendo that the Supreme Being no longer is able to tolerate it though he is most tolerant, magnanimous and forgiving, and decides to finally wind up the whole thing by punishing the world by clean sweeping the slate. Only the righteous and auspicious few survive who would become the progenitors of the next cycle.

There are four eras, called 'Yugs', in the celestial cycle of creation and annihilation according to the Hindu belief. These are no formal boundaries segregating any two individual eras as such, to distinguish one from the other. They coalesce and seamlessly merge one into the other. The transition from one era to another is smooth, it's almost like going up a hill station from the heated plains below—as we gradually ascend the slope of the mountain, the air gradually becomes cooler and purer. The moral conduct of the people, their standard of mind and intellect, their thought processes and ideals, their norms of behaviours and criterion to decide what is good and what is bad, their definition of righteousness, virtuousness, nobility, propriety, probity, ethics, morality, justice as well as emancipation, salvation, liberation, deliverance, devotion, worship and spiritualism etc.—all these and relevant other aspects determined the characteristics and general demeanours of a particular era or age. In this context, the first era called the 'Kritiyug' was considered the best and the ideal era. With the fall in standards and the gradual creeping in of evil, vices, perversions and other degrading and denigrating qualities which seeped into the moral fiber of the people, the first phase transformed into the second era called the 'Treta Yug'. It was in this era that Lord Ram took birth. The third era was 'Dwapar Yug'—the age of Lord Krishna, in which the legendary Mahabharata clan war between two clans was fought for most worldly of things. The present, the fourth and the last era, is called 'Kaliyug', and in this we live. As we can observe, a whole book can be written on the characteristic features of 'Kaliyug' and its people, the moral fabric and their way of thinking which is marked by selfishness, perversion and all the vices and evils which one can think of.

This short commentary is to highlight the fact that Sri Ram's reign in 'Tretayug' was different from the rest of the 'Yugs' which came after him. Surdas has clearly hinted at the gradual fall in moral standards when he says that 'the righteousness and virtuous conduct that characterized the earlier era called Kritiyug became a dominant and salient feature in people's life even in Treta Yug'. It was not a general law or norm of behaviour during Treta, but since the Lord Sri Ram himself had ascended the throne, such virtues did become a reality even when not expected.

Goswami Tulsidas has cited the various measurements of time in a Doha being a part of the invocational lines of Lanka Kand of his epic Ram Charit Manas, as well as in Dohawali as Doha no. 130. To quote—"Oh mind! Why don't you worship Lord Ram (the Viraat Purush, the cosmic Lord) whose bow resembles Kaal (the time factor and death or end of creation), and the arrows are like the various divisions (fractions) of time such as a Lava, a Nimesh, a Parmaan, a Yug (era or epoch), a Baras (year), and a Kalpa."

Now, let us see what these individual terms referring to various measurements of time technically mean. The smallest fraction of time is the *Parmaan*, i.e. the time

taken by light to pass through an atom, or the time taken by a photon to travel through an atom, or for an atom to oscillate.

The *Nimesh* is the time taken for the eyelid to close and open once.

The *Lav* is equivalent to 36 such Nimesh.

The *Jug* or *Yug* is an era or an epoch; it may consist of a hundred years or thousands of years. According to Hindu belief, one cycle of creation and destruction of the whole world consists of 4 Yugs—viz. the Sata Yug, the Treta Yug when Lord Ram was born, the Dwapar Yug when Lord Krishna came down to earth, and the Kali Yug which is the current era of the four Yug cycle. The ‘Kalpa’ is equivalent to 1 day in the life of Brahma, the creator; it is equal to 1000 four-Yug cycles.

The word *Kaal* has many connotations—it refers to death, an end, conclusion of what exists, a frame of time, a notion of time that is relative, creating the sense of present, the past and the future.

In practice, Tulsidas means that whatever or whoever that is born or created in this world is bound to die or come to an end. Nothing and no one is eternal and imperishable. Some exist for a fraction of time, some longer for many years, and some others for thousands of years. Even Brahma the creator has his life-span fixed and measured. There is an Upanishad known as Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atarva Veda tradition in which the life-span of Brahma is clearly defined in its Canto 3, paragraph nos. 8-9.

According to the *Shiva Puran*, the units of celestial time and the cycle of creation and conclusion is as follows—

The smallest unit of time is known as ‘Nimesha’. This is the amount of time it takes to blink. Fifteen Nimeshas make one ‘Kashtha’, and thirty kashthas are one ‘Kala’. Thirty Kalas make one ‘Muhurta’, and thirty Muhurtas are ‘One Day’. Thirty days are ‘One Month’. Each month is divided into ‘two lunar fortnights’—viz. the ‘Shukla-paksha’ (bright lunar fortnight) and the ‘Krishna-paksha’ (dark lunar fortnight). Six months are called an ‘Ayana’. There are thus two Ayanas in a year.

Three hundred and sixty human years are equivalent to one year for the gods.

The lengths of the four ‘Yugas’ (eras) are defined in terms of the years of the gods, not in terms of human years. There are four eras and their names are respectively Sata-yuga or Kritayuga, Tretayuga, Dvaparayuga and Kaliyuga.

The Satyayuga lasts for four thousand divine years; the Tretayuga for three thousand divine years; the Dvaparayuga for two thousand divine years; and the Kaliyuga for one thousand divine years. This adds up to ten thousand divine years.

The ‘Sandhyas’ and ‘Sandhyamshas’ are the intervening periods between the Yugas, and these add up to two thousand divine years.

Thus, the four Yugas taken together last for twelve thousand divine years.

In a ‘Kalpa’ (cycle of creation, development and conclusion), each of the four Yugas occurs a thousand times. A Kalpa has fourteen ‘Manvantaras’ (eras). In a Manvantara, each of the four Yugas thus occurs seventy one times.

One Kalpa corresponds to one day for Brahma. One thousand Kalpas are one of Brahma’s years. Eight thousand of Brahma’s years make one of Brahma’s Yugas. One thousand such Yugas make up one ‘Savana’, and Brahma lives for three thousand Savanas’. This period is known as a ‘Trivrita’.

During each of Vishnu’s days, one Brahma is born and dies. And during each of Shiva’s days, one Vishnu is born and dies.

We shall read below that Kaagbhusund is telling the story of his life when he was born as a Shudra (the lowest of the society) during one such period of Kaliyug. The narration extending from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Doha no. 103 would also highlight the characteristic of the age in which we also live. Upon close examination a discerning reader will find a lot of similarity in what Kaagbhusund says and the world in which he or she actually lives. But the overall gloomy picture has a bright ray of hope at the end of the dark tunnel, and this ray of hope is highlighted in Doha no. 103.]

चौ०. तेहिं कलिजुग कोसलपुर जाई । जन्मत भयउँ सूद्र तनु पाई ॥ १ ॥
सिव सेवक मन क्रम अरु बानी । आन देव निंदक अभिमानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tēhiṁ kalijuga kōsalapura jā'ī. janmata bhaya'um̐ sūdra tanu pā'ī. 1.
siva sēvaka mana krama aru bānī. āna dēva nindaka abhimānī. 2.

In the particular Kaliyug I am talking about, I¹ had gone to take birth as a Shudra (the lowest rung in the hierarchy of society) in Kaushalpuri (Ayodhya). (1)

I was extremely devoted to Lord Shiva, and worshipped the Lord with all my faculties and abilities, employing my mind, my speech and my deeds. But unfortunately I used to be proud and haughty (of my devotion for Lord Shiva), and criticise other deities and gods². (2)

[Note—¹The pronoun 'I' here refers to the Atma, the soul that is the 'true identity' and 'true self' of any living being. This Atma is eternal and unchangeable as opposed to the gross body that changes from one life to another.

²Kaagbhusund would say that he is very devoted to Lord Shiva who is the best amongst the Gods. Therefore it meant he was wiser and knew more than others. This in effect meant that he would say that all of deities and gods are inconsequential and not worthy of respect and reverence as compared to Shiva. Now he regrets he shouldn't have done it because all the gods and deities are different forms of the same Supreme Being, and therefore criticising one of these forms is equivalent to insulting the Lord himself. But he acknowledges that he was so egoist and stubborn that he would not listen and mend his ways.]

धन मद मत्त परम बाचाला । उग्रबुद्धि उर दंभ बिसाला ॥ ३ ॥
जदपि रहेउँ रघुपति रजधानी । तदपि न कछु महिमा तब जानी ॥ ४ ॥

dhana mada matta parama bācālā. ugrabud'dhi ura dambha bisālā. 3.
jadapi rahē'um̐ raghupati rajadhānī. tadapi na kachu mahimā taba jānī. 4.

I was intoxicated by the pride of pelf, was most talkative, had a reckless mind and a savage intellect, and my heart was full of immense conceit and an enormous amount of hypocrisy. (3)

It is such a paradox and an irony of destiny that though I (took birth and) lived in the capital of Lord Ram (Raghupati), I did not realise its glory, its holiness, its spiritual value and its significance for the creature¹. (4)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund said: “Though I lived in the holy city of Ayodhya where Lord Ram had once manifested during the Treta Yug, I was so deluded that I did not maintain the sanctity of the holy place, but foolishly treated it as any other ordinary place during Kaliyug, and so I indulged in evil behaviour unmindful of the grave mistake I am making. I mimicked others in the world around me, and behaved like so many fallen people do who have no regard to what is good and what is not.

I could have led a righteous life of devotion for Lord Ram, worshipping the Lord and making the best use of my time and life in a sanctified place that was once the abode of the Lord. But it is so regrettable that I lived a lowly life that had all the elements that lead to the downfall of the creature’s soul.”]

अब जाना मैं अवध प्रभावा । निगमागम पुरान अस गावा ॥ ५ ॥

कवनेहुँ जन्म अवध बस जोई । राम परायन सो परि होई ॥ ६ ॥

aba jānā mair̥m avadha prabhāvā. nigamāgama purāna asa gāvā. 5.

kavanēhum̐ janma avadha basa jōī. rāma parāyana sō pari hōī. 6.

[Though I did not realise it at that time, but—] Now I realise the glory and greatness of Ayodhya. The Vedas, the Tantras and the Purans have lauded the immensity of the spiritual value of Ayodhya when they say that --- (5)

--- If anyone takes birth in Ayodhya at any time of his journey through the countless cycles of birth and death that a creature passes through, it is sure that the person would become devoted to Lord Ram, worship the Lord and become dedicated to him (rāma parāyana)¹. (6)

[Note—¹The pilgrim place dedicated to Lord Ram, i.e. the city of Ayodhya, is full of temples and places dedicated to Lord Ram. The general environment of the place is soaked with elements of devotion, worship, reverence and adoration for Lord Ram. A person is bound to be affected by the environment in which he lives long, and so no matter if a person does not especially focus his attention on worshipping the Lord and doing service to him, he is sure to be spiritually positively affected by the air of religiosity and holiness that pervades everywhere in Ayodhya.

The place abounds in temples and shrines dedicated to Lord Ram, and they impart a halo of holiness to Ayodhya. Sound of bells chiming and ringing during various rituals, and repetition of prayers emanate from temples almost all through the day. The Lord’s holy name is chanted or silently repeated by the majority of the inhabitants even as they go about the routine affairs of their lives. Various religious events are held here and there, and the general air is marked by devotion and dedication for Lord Ram who is the presiding deity of the city.

This sort of holy environment prevalent in Ayodhya is in sharp contrast with the sounds and airs characteristic of humdrum life and commerce in other cities, though it is also true that as time is going by the aura of piety and holiness so

characteristic of Ayodhya of ancient times as described in the scriptures is on the wane as Kaliyug has slowly started raising its ugly hood even here.]

अवध प्रभाव जान तब प्रानी । जब उर बसहिं रामु धनुपानी ॥ ७ ॥
सो कलिकाल कठिन उरगारी । पाप परायन सब नर नारी ॥ ८ ॥

avadha prabhāva jāna taba prānī. jaba ura basahim rāmu dhanupānī. 7.
sō kalikāla kaṭhina uragārī. pāpa parāyana saba nara nārī. 8.

A living being (prānī) understands the real spiritual value of Ayodhya and benefits from it only when Lord Ram, who holds a bow in his hands, resides in his heart¹. (7)

Oh the Enemy of Serpents (“uragārī”—i.e. Garud)! That particular age of Kali (in which I was born as a Shudra in Ayodhya) was terribly horrifying. All men and women were indulgent in sins and perversities. (8)

[Note—¹It is clear that simply taking birth in Ayodhya won't serve any worthwhile spiritual purpose for a Jiva or living being if he does not have sincere and abiding devotion and affection for Lord Ram, if he is not dedicated to the Lord, if he does not worship, reveres and adores the Lord. A true devotee of the Lord would make his heart a veritable 'temple or a shrine' where he would consecrate the image of Lord Ram with a bow in hand as depicted in the scriptures, and once having done it he would worship the Lord like a person worships a deity in a temple.]

दो०. कलिमल ग्रसे धर्म सब लुप्त भए सदग्रंथ ।
दंभिन्ह निज मति कल्पि करि प्रगट किए बहु पंथ ॥ ९७ (क) ॥
dōhā.

kalimala grasē dharma saba lupṭa bha'e sadagrantha.
dambhinha nija mati kalpi kari pragata ki'e bahu pantha. 97 (a).

The dark shadow of depravity, wickedness, sins, vices and evils that were prevalent in the age of Kali had eclipsed and engulfed all possible good virtues that are collectively called the principles of Dharma. All good books and scriptures had disappeared, and had become untraceable and inaccessible.

In place of the established auspicious and righteous path espoused by the scriptures and the principles of Dharma (that describe what is good and proper, and what is not), hypocrites, wicked people and imposters of pervert mentality had invented numerous religious dispensations, orders, creeds and sects out of their own fanciful wills and imaginations, proclaiming them to be sanctified and sacrosanct. (Doha no. 97-a)

भए लोग सब मोहबस लोभ ग्रसे सुभ कर्म ।
सुनु हरिजान ग्यान निधि कहउँ कछुक कलिधर्म ॥ ९७ (ख) ॥

bha'e lōga saba mōhabasa lōbha grasē subha karma.
 sunu harijāna gyāna nidhi kaha'um' kachuka kalidharma. 97 (b).

All the people were overcome by and had fallen prey to delusions and its inherent negativities. Excessive greed and rapacity had eclipsed all actions and deeds that are auspicious, righteous, pious and good.

Listen, oh the Mount of Lord Hari and the Wise One ("sunu harijāna, gyāna nidhi"—i.e. Garud)! Now I shall tell you about some of the unique features or peculiarities of Kaliyug that were deemed to be the rule rather than the exception during that period. (Doha no. 97-b)

चौ०. बरन धर्म नहिं आश्रम चारी । श्रुति बिरोध रत सब नर नारी ॥ १ ॥

द्विज श्रुति बेचक भूप प्रजासन । कोउ नहिं मान निगम अनुसासन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

barana dharma nahim āśrama cārī. śruti birōdha rata saba nara nārī. 1.
 dvija śruti bēcaka bhūpa prajāśana. kō'u nahim māna nigama anusāsana. 2.

No one respects or follows the duties of their respective castes which are known as the 'four Varanas', nor do they obey the discipline expected of them during the four stages of life known as the 'four Ashrams'¹.

All men and women are opposed to the Vedas (ancient scriptures); they abhor them and do not follow any of their tenets, treating them with contempt and as mere heresy. (1)

The Brahmins (who are supposed to be teachers of the scriptures and their custodians) sell the Vedas.

[To wit, they use the Vedas to feed their stomachs, and acquire fame and wealth. Out of greed and selfish interests, they even tweak the tenets of the Vedas to please their patrons if the need arises. They have no compunctions about compromising on the sanctity of the Vedas, and they treat them as their inheritance which they are free to use in a manner that suits them, unconcerned whether their actions would undermine the authority, sanctity and holiness of the ancient scriptures.]

The Kings of the realm become blood-suckers; they do not treat their subjects as their dependants who ought to be shown compassion and mercy, but exploit them in any way they can, unmindful of their sufferings and miseries.

No one obeys and follows the tenets and discipline of the Vedas.

[To wit, people treat the Vedas as useless texts of no practical use; they deride them and mock at them; they treat them as books of heresy.] (2)

[Note—¹The four Varanas and the four Ashrams:

(A) The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes or segments or divisions by ancient sages for the sake of convenience and proper regulation of the huge society, for the purpose of its regulation and ease of its administration. These four divisions are called 'Varnas', and they are the following—Brahmins, Kshatriyas,

Vaishyas and Sudras. Members of each division have their role in society clearly marked and are expected to do their duties faithfully and diligently. Ancient sages and seers had envisioned this hierarchical system so that the society functions smoothly and each member knows what he or she is expected to do. This helps in proper administration and regulation of the society, proper maintenance of its law and order, as well as in fixing accountability.

It helped in judicious distribution of work to be done, to regulate the functioning of the society by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. This system helped in judicious regulation of the working of the society as a whole because each individual member of any given Varna knew what is expected of him. It helped in proper distribution of work that had to be done for day-to-day survival, without any duplicity and tussle.

But these four divisions were not water-tight compartments, and since their primary aim was maintenance and proper functioning of the society, these roles smoothly merged into one another at their meeting points.

For instance, though 'Brahmins' were primarily the elderly class well versed in the scriptures and assigned the job of acting as teachers, guides, advisors and preceptors, they was no bar for them to act as regents and warriors to protect others should the situation so demand.

The 'Kshatriya' was primarily responsible for giving protection to the society so that the rest of its members can carry out their duties without fear.

The society had to be fed and provided with material comfort and needs of daily life. This was the duty of the 'Vaishya' who was essentially of the trading community generating wealth and providing for the necessities of life.

But there should be someone who will attend to manual labour and serve the society so that its other members are freed from the grind of humdrum affairs of life to carry out their own duties. These were the 'Sudras'. They did manual work which we ordinarily call a servant's job. All types of tradesmen, craftsmen, smiths etc, such as washermen, carpenters, blacksmiths, farmers, herdsmen, boatmen, and countless other vocations and professions that made the society's wheel running and well-oiled were classified as 'Sudra'. The scriptures call them the 'foot of the man' in the sense that just as a man can't stand up to do anything or go anywhere without his legs, the society won't be able to stand up and function without the help of Sudras. It is obvious that the term 'Sudra' was not meant to demean or degrade any member of the society at large, for in fact they formed the base or foundation upon which the society stood and functioned without having to worry about physical support by way of manual labour that can help the Brahmin, the Kshatriya and the Vaishya perform their duties properly.

As will be clearly observed by the above reading, our ancient forefathers and patriarchs had been wise and prudent in establishing this four segment hierarchical system in society. Otherwise, there is utter chaos and anarchy in society due to dominance of evil influences of Kaliyug. It is just like misgovernance in a country when the administrative machinery collapses and there is complete mayhem everywhere.

So we see that there are four castes in the society according to Hinduism. They are the "Brahmins" who are at top end of this hierarchy and are principally ordained to act as teachers and moral guides; the "Kshatriyas" who are at the second rung and are tasked with the job of protecting the rest of the society from physical danger from

enemies, and maintain the rule of law and order through the rank and file of society; the “Vaishyas” who are assigned the task of looking after the material and financial affairs of the society; and the “Shudras” who are required to serve the rest of the members of the society so that they are freed to carry on their assigned duties as outlined above.

The “Chandaals” are at the lowest rung, and are usually assigned the task of carrying out the last rites of a dead person. They live outside villages. Since they deal with dead bodies, they also perform some other jobs that no one else would be willing to do—such as skinning of dead animals and using their hides for use, such as making of shoes and cover for war-shields etc.; they work in tanneries, as butchers and as cobblers.

Now let us delve a little deeper and understand more about them. As stated above, these four sections of the society are the following—(a) Brahmins*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

In ancient Indian tradition, the kings and the ruling class belonged to the caste called ‘Kshatriya’, and their main job/vocation was giving protection and providing sustenance to their subjects belonging to the other three castes. To do this, they had to wage wars—some in defense and some in aggression because they wanted to expand their area of influence. But wars nevertheless involved bloodshed which any peace loving soul of Satwic tendency would abhor. So a king could be Satwic by temperament but Rajsic by occupation and compulsion. Those who were Satwic were prescribed the non-violent method of worship and sacrifices to Goddess Durga during peace times as described in *Devipurana Mahabagwat*, Canto 46, verse nos. 15-17½, while those of Rajsic bearings were to do worship requiring animal sacrifices as described in verse nos. 17-21, especially in preparation for and during wars. Even today it is observed that the army is non-vegetarian in its food habits because the solders cannot kill their enemies in battle—as is required of them because of their vocation as a soldier—if they avoid killing and instead show mercy and compassion on their enemies. Perhaps this is the reason why meat-eating is never looked down in army; in fact, it is a normal diet amongst the Kshatriya class. Though mercy and compassion are indeed supremely good qualities, they are not meant for the battlefield unless the enemy surrenders and relents. The world would have been a ‘heaven-on-earth’ if this quality prevailed in the battlefield! However, since Sri Ram was at war with a vicious, unforgiving, cruel and formidable enemy (Ravana), and a lot was at stake (e.g. the very existence of the world and its peace), and it was a no-holds-barred, fierce and uncompromising war, the second category of worship—animal sacrifice symbolising the death of the enemy—was prescribed for him by the Goddess. And this was precisely what Brahma and other Gods did as is evident in verse nos. 33.

Yajur Veda 31st Chapter, 11th Mantra says that Brahmins are the mouth of society, the Kshatriyas are its arms, Vaishyas are its stomach or abdomen, and Shudras are its legs. The body is regarded as a symbol of the society. As is obvious in

this analogy, all these four units of the body must function properly and in close cooperation with each other in order that the body can survive and live comfortably and carry on with its assigned duties in an orderly fashion. The mouth is important because it is the medium by which the body takes food and speaks; the arms procure food and gives protection to the body against enemies; the stomach digests food and supplies the whole body with the energy needed by it; the abdomen holds all the internal organs; and the legs carry the body wherever it wants to go such as the place where food is available. Since food is the basis necessity of life, this instance is cited here. And the logic can be extended to everything else. Each component of the society must work properly in order that the whole society survives; each component is as vital as the other; each has its own importance in the bigger picture.

As time passed, by and by, the Kshatriya class had become very haughty and arrogant because all physical powers and military strength were vested in it. The king's treasury was supposed to be a common pool where the society could keep its wealth that it generates by toil, and the king was merely its custodian. But as time passed, the kings began to treat this treasury as their personal property, and while they rolled in luxury the peasant class, the working class that toiled day in and day out to generate this wealth hadn't a square meal to dump in their empty tummies and a roof to cover them against the vagaries of cruel Nature. Though the powers and wealth of the Kshatriya class were meant for the welfare of the society as a whole, more often than not these elements went to the head of kings, making them arrogant, haughty, exploitative and insensitive towards others.

We read about an incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the form of sage Parashuram who had eliminated the Kshatriya race several times over by killing them and handing over the earth to the Brahmins. The elimination of such wild kings belonging to the Kshatriya Varna who had deviated from their duties and moral responsibilities that were ordained by ancient sages and seers became obligatory for the Supreme Lord of the world as the Lord was the Father of all, and he could not bear with one of his offsprings making others suffer because of his own pervert behaviour and selfishness. Hence, the Lord assumed the form of sage Parashuram to teach a lesson to such wicked kings who had fallen from their paths.

Killing such Kshatriya kings and restoring the earth to Brahmins should be viewed in this context; it has a great symbolic meaning. Whenever evil tendencies and negativity rises in this world, be it in the guise of demons or kings, the Lord comes down to set the house in order. This is the reason why sage Parashuram is regarded as one of the many incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world.

The logical spin-off of this is that Lord Ram and sage Parashuram are both the same Lord in different roles. What Lord Ram did for the welfare of sages and the humble creatures of the world by killing their tormentor demons led by Ravana of Lanka, sage Parashuram did the same thing by killing arrogant and wicked Kshatriya kings and handing over the world to pious and holy men known as Brahmins.

*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'-be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the

benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahman.]

This word 'Brahmin' is too often misunderstood and misinterpreted to mean a particular member of the society who is supposed to be given respect, no matter what his moral and educational standard is. The real intention is not that even a corrupt, unwise, morally depraved and foolish person should be honoured just because he is born a 'Brahmin'. The intention of the scriptures is never this. In ancient times this was the class of people who were designated to study the scriptures and act as moral and practical guide to the rest of the society. This was envisioned by our ancestors to help regulate the functioning of the society in an orderly manner by dividing the entire working into four clear segments and delineating each segment with a list of duties its members were supposed to do. This prevented clash and duplicity of work, as each of the four classes knew what it is supposed to do. This in effect created a hierarchy in the society, with the learned ones who were known as the 'Brahmins' occupying the upper rung just like a patriarch of a large extended family who oversees the working and welfare of the entire family. A patriarch is an old man, and has the backing of years of experience behind him. Obviously he is the most competent man to give sane and rationale advice to the younger generation. This exactly was the role of the Brahmin.

Even in the modern world, a child is taught to give respect to his elders; its part of his moral education. Hence, 'paying respects to Brahmins' should be understood in the correct perspective.

An entire Upanishad called *Vajra-shuchiko-panishad*, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, Canto 3, Brahman 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse no. 10.

The *Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, paragraph no. 7 describes in a holistic way the virtues of a true Brahmin as the one who is highly wise, self-realised, erudite and enlightened about the Atma and the principles governing the true meaning of Brahmin and such religious signs as doing fire sacrifices, wearing the sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the head, observing sacraments etc.

To quote this Upanishad—'A true Brahmin is a wise and enlightened person who treats the Atma, the pure consciousness, as the non-dual Principal of creation (i.e. who regards the Atma as a personification of the supreme Brahmin that is non-dual or Advaita and the only supreme Authority of creation), and for whom being steady in his meditation, reflection and contemplation as well as spiritual pursuit is the symbolic tuft of hair—such a person is deemed to be cleansed and made holy by whatever he does. This is because all his deeds are deemed to be auspicious and holy. [That is, he need not do special deeds such as fire sacrifices or observing of sacraments in order to wash off his sins or any kind of spiritual taints that might be adhering to him.]

He is deemed to have completed doing all religious and auspicious deeds required to be done by a man.

It must be understood that such an enlightened man is indeed a Brahmin for he is dedicated and devoted to Brahmin (the Supreme Being), he is no less than a God, he is indeed a 'Rishi' (or a great sage), he is a 'Tapasvi' (or someone who is well endowed with the glorious virtues of Tapa, i.e. austerity and penance, and is steadfast in observing its tenets), he is the best follower of the tenets of the scriptures and an excellent spiritual aspirant, he is therefore the Guru (guide, teacher and preceptor) for the whole world.

A truly wise, enlightened and self-realised aspirant who understands the implications and import of what has been said above realises the truth of the statement that the pure conscious Atma standing for Brahm is the true identity of his. And therefore such an enlightened man declares ‘It (Brahm; Atma; Truth; Consciousness) is me’.

The *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 19 describes who a true Brahmin is as follows—“A true Brahmin is one who wears the Yagya Sutra (the sacred thread worn during the performance of fire sacrifices, especially the symbolic one as narrated in verse no. 16), who employs the Pranav Mantra (i.e. the OM Mantra) for his religious needs (such as when doing Japa or repetition, Yoga or meditation, Dhyana or reflection and contemplation, etc.), and who is well-versed in the principles of Brahm Yagya (spiritual practices which are equivalent to a formal fire sacrifice but done in a subtle and symbolic manner which lead directly to the realisation of the supreme cosmic Consciousness and the absolute Truth known as Brahm).

The Gods (the term is a metaphor for the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, nobility etc.) are to be found in the diligent observance of the principles that define a man as a Brahmin. [That is, if a man is a true Brahmin as outlined above, he is deemed to be living God in the sense that he would possess all the eclectic virtues that collectively defined as being ‘godly’.]

The *Par Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse nos. 8-13 describe who *is* a true Brahmin, and verse no. 14 describes who *is not*. Now, let us examine what these verses say.

First let us see *who is not a true Brahmin*:--“Verse no. 14 = Those Brahmins who are engrossed merely in performing rituals and observing sacraments, or who are engaged in the mundane affairs of the world are Brahmins only for name’s sake (and not true Brahmins), because they live only to fill their stomachs and enjoy the fame, comforts and pleasures that come with worldly respect. Such people go to hell at the end of their lives.

[That is, they continue to take birth and die again, and during each life they undergo sufferings and miseries that are part and parcel of gross mundane existence. They do not find Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance, nor do they find peace and bliss that comes with self and Brahm realisation. They do not have true Gyan, and are only pretending to have it to fulfill their worldly desires. In short, they are not true Brahmins, they are imposters, and they do not do justice to the institution of Brahmhood. They give the holy stature of being a Brahmin a bad name.

The question arises, who then is a true Brahmin? The answer is self-evident in the foregoing as well as the following verses. That is, only those who have true knowledge of Brahm, and the depth of wisdom and enlightenment to understand what the term ‘Brahm’ is all about, who do not hanker after external purity and formalities but lay stress on inner cleansing and sincerity of purpose are true Brahmins. Such people would not be much bothered about sporting a tuft on the head or wearing the sacred thread to prove that they are Brahmins, but would instead strive to inculcate the glorious virtues that are so typical of those who have become self and Brahm realised, who have really understood the truth and reality of things.] (14).”

Now, let us see *who is a true Brahmin*:—

“verse no. 8 = A person who has understood the real and true import of the term ‘Sutra’ (literally the sacred thread as well as the formula that unfolds the path of Brahm-realisation) is the one who is eligible to attain Moksha (spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation), is a true Bhikshuk (a monk, a mendicant or

a friar), is truly a Vedagya (one who is an expert in the Vedas and their tenets), is Sadachari (one who follows the path of truth and auspiciousness), and is a Vipra (a Brahmin; a learned and elderly man).

Such a man is not only holy himself but also makes those with whom he comes in contact holy and pure (8).

“verse no. 9 = The supreme transcendental Brahm who is the thread that has knitted together all the units of creation and holds them in place like beads in a rosary or a garland, the ascetic who wears this sacred thread (i.e. who accepts Brahm as the basic essence of creation and honours Brahm exclusively) is indeed said to be an expert ascetic who is well-versed in the philosophy of Yoga (9).

“verse no. 10 = A Brahmin, an expert ascetic who is well-versed in Yoga, and a person who is wise, learned and enlightened should abandon the external sacred thread, because the real thread that bestows spiritual liberation and deliverance is not the external thread made of a gross material (e.g. cotton thread or silk thread) but the symbolic sacred thread representing Brahm that is worn (accepted) internally.

When the sacred thread representing Brahm is symbolically worn internally, there is no fear of it ever getting defiled or polluted; it would permanently be holy and pure (10).

“verse no. 11 = Those who wear the sacred thread after fully understanding its metaphysical importance and spiritual significance, those who have realised that this sacred thread represents Brahm in its entirety are the ones who wear it in the true sense, and therefore are eligible for the benefits that accrue by wearing it. [For the rest, it is merely a formality that can fool the world into believing that the wearer is a holy man, and nothing more. It would not serve them any real purpose except worldly praise.] (11).

“verse no. 12 = Those who wear the Shikha and the Sutra as symbols of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment which kindles spiritual awakening and truth-realisation) regard Gyan as the best thing in this world to acquire and aim for. This is because Gyan is the holiest and the purest thing in this world. [It shows the correct path to the aspirant, and never misleads him for some vested self-interest.] (12).

“verse no. 13 = Those who are wise and enlightened assert that those persons who understand that the Shikha (tuft of hair on the head) is as powerful and potent as the fire element itself are the ones who are true wearers of it. For the rest, they are merely sporting a crop of hair on the head, and nothing more (13).”

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give the needed protection and security to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma's feet symbolising service.

Reasons for classification—The *Niralambo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 10 states the reason for the classification of the society in four classes as follows—“The skin, blood, flesh, bones and the Atma/soul have no caste, creed, colour or race. These have been conceived as a practical measure to regulate and control our day to day behaviours and interactions with each other (10).”

This is an important verse which clearly states that all are equal in the eyes of the scriptures. The different classes or castes or sects or creeds or races which the society has been divided and classified into are man made and artificial. It is just for the sake of convenience of the purpose of delineation of duties and to lay down procedure and guidelines for mutual interactions and determine one's specific place in the hierarchy of existence even as we have a system of hierarchical governance in place in modern society. For example, a Brahmin was supposed to be the teacher and guide for the rest of the society, and the Kshatriya was supposed to give protection to it, while its finances and material needs were looked after by the Vaishya, and it was manually served by the Shudra. This delegation of duties and responsibilities demanded that each person belonging to a particular class should adhere to the laws and regulations meant for that particular class to ensure uninterrupted carrying out of duties and prevention of friction and overlapping of functions causing unnecessary tension and duplicity. This segregation was therefore meant to make life regulated and easy, and not to say that one man was in anyway superior to another in terms of his essential being as a human and a living creature. This is because the Atma or soul, which is pure and conscious, is one in all the creatures, whether he is a man or a woman, a Brahmin or a Shudra. Further, other components of the body, such as the skin, blood etc., are obviously the same in all humans, and if taken in their fundamental and essential form they are the same in all living creatures, whether they are humans or animals. For example, blood when analysed in a chemical laboratory will show the same principal constituents whether it is taken from a Brahmin or from a Kshatriya; blood's constituents would remain the same for all segments of society. Similarly, skin and other parts of the body have no basic difference. The visible and other apparent differences that appear in different forms of life which are fundamentally the same is also supported by the Upanishads when they say that the Atma assumes different forms depending upon its past deeds and their accumulated effects, but the essential form of this Atma remains the same nevertheless. When we talk of 'life' we

mean the entire living kingdom consisting of the plants and the animals, including the humans. This is the holistic view of the Upanishads.

Origin of the four Varnas—The *Param Hans Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 1 says that Brahma the creator had learned about the four Varnas and the laws governing them from his father Lord Adi Narayan, i.e. from Lord Vishnu in his primary form as Lord Viraat Purush from whose navel Brahma was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from it.

The *Subalo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6, and Canto 2, verse 1 describes the origin of these four classes in society. Let us see what it has to say on the subject.

“Verse no. 6, Canto 1—From this Brahma, the creator, emerged the rest of the creation as follows:--From his mouth came into being the Brahmins; from his arms were created the Kshatriyas; from his thighs evolved the Vaishyas; and from his legs were created the Shudras. From his Mana (mind) came into being the Moon; from his eyes evolved the Sun; from the ears arose the external wind (present in the entire cosmos) as well as the Pran (the vital wind in the form of breath that sustains life, as also the other vital winds that control other functions of the body of a creature); and finally from his heart sprouted the rest of creation [6].

{(1) These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance efficiently just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped and equal intensity of pain if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. All are equal in his eyes. The four classes had specific jobs cut out for them so that the society could function smoothly.

Mouth is used to advice and teach; hence the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exists, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned because they represented the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Vedas. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas were those sons of Brahma who would do the needed by affording protection to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour; merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life, such as production and distribution of food and generation of wealth to provide basic comforts. So he created the Vaishyas to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life on his behalf. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores and the service part, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras. None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/4/11-13, and Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

(2) The ‘moon’ stands for emotions and sentiments of a creature, hence its origin in the Mana which is the epicenter of all emotive thoughts. The sun shows light to the world, hence its symbolic origin in the eye of the creator. The ears hear sound from all the directions, and sound has its origin in waves which travel in space through the medium of the ether, because sound cannot be either heard or can reach any place without any medium. This medium was called the wind, and since the ears make the presence of sound evident, the wind or air has its origin in the ears of Brahma. These ears are physically shaped like a radar or satellite dish antenna because they not only transmit sound waves but also receive them. They are like a 2-way radio receiver. And of course, the world has any relevance and importance if only the heart loves it and wishes to be enamoured with it. Once the heart starts to loathe it, or becomes dispassionate towards it, the world becomes irrelevant; therefore the world becomes non-existent as far as the creature is concerned.}

“Verse no. 1, Canto 2—From the creator’s Apaana wind (the vital wind which is inhaled and moves down in the body, thereby helping in digestion and excretory functions) was created the ‘Nishad’ community (the boatmen and elephant tamers), the ‘Yakshas’ (a type of demi-God who guards the treasure of the Gods), the ‘Rakshas’ (the ones with evil, pervert, sinful and demonic tendencies), and the ‘Gandharvas’ (celestial musicians; those junior Gods who were lower in the hierarchy of heavenly Gods).

From the bones of the creator were formed the mountains; from his body hairs came into being the members of the botanical kingdom, the various plants and vegetations, including the medicinal herbs; and from his forehead creased with anger evolved the God of wrath, or ‘Rudra’ [1].

{(1)The Nishad community was considered lower than the Shudras. In practical terms this refers to the fact that these people stayed outside the villages and cities, and had little interaction with those people who were regarded as more educated and cultured. The fishermen and others who took care of animals, such as horses, elephants etc. also belonged to this group. The Yaksha was the guard of the God’s treasury; here they were assigned the job of protecting the assets that would be generated by the other classes in social hierarchy. The society had all types of people; some of them were wicked and evil. They were the Rakshas. And the Gandharva was a soul who had aspired to be as exalted as a God but somewhere went astray from his path and became a junior God. All these designations imply that the creation created by the creator had all shades of creatures in it, and all of them were his sons because all were formed from a part of his body. (2) Obviously Brahma got annoyed when his sons started bickering among themselves. So he got angry, and his forehead creased in annoyance. This metamorphosed into Rudra. The word Rudra means anger, wrath, vehemence etc. This Rudra was the God of tempest and destruction. He is also identified with Kaal or time and death, because Rudra sparked annihilation when the opportune time for destruction came. The terrible shaft of Rudra brings death and disease to cattle and man, just like plague/pestilence mentioned in the *Holy Bible*.}

Besides the usual ‘four Varanas’, some texts say that there are ‘five Varanas’, and also ‘six Varanas.’

The 5 *Varnas* are the following—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Nishad who belong to the hunting and boatman tribe.

The 6 *Varnas* are following—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, Nishad (who belong to the hunting and boatman tribe) and Chandala who perform last rites of

the dead and stay in the cremation ground and away from inhabited areas of cities and villages.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Brahman 5, verse no. 7 says that even the Chandals and Nishads or out-castes in the society can and should wear the sacred ash called Bhasma on their bodies in order to benefit from its great power of purification and bringing the wearer closer to the supreme Brahman or Shiva. But they should use ash derived from the funeral pyre in cremation grounds instead of from the pit of a religious fire sacrifice done according to Vedic tradition in which the hymns of the Vedas are chanted.

(B) The four Ashrams:

The life of a (Hindu) man was divided into four quarters by ancient sages, forefathers and patriarchs of the society. These four quarters are the following—Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyas. Each quarter was of approximately 20-25 years.

The first quarter is when a man was supposed to study and learn the skills that are needed for the affairs of an adult life. This was 'Brahmacharya Ashram'. The word literally means a celibate and one who exercises self-restraint. This was essential for study and inculcating skills which require focus of mind and heart. During this time, the man is young and is supposed to observe austerities while he studies and acquires knowledge to equip him to face the world when he grows up.

The second quarter is 'Grihastha Ashram'. It is when the student enters the household phase of life. He marries, raises a family and carries on with his profession or vocation to increase wealth and progeny.

When a person becomes ripe in age, his working capacity decreases and he must prepare to pass on the baton to the next generation, to his heirs when they are ready to step in his shoes, and when he has done his bit for society. This is the 'Vanaprastha Ashram'—the third phase of life when a person prepares to hand the responsibilities of his worldly affairs to his heirs and mentally prepares himself to lead a calm and detached life so that he can get ready for the final phase of old age.

Though it literally means 'heading for the forest', but not necessarily it be so. Its primary function is to withdraw from playing an active role in the affairs of the world and give one's mind and body rest and peace after the toil of the previous years. In ancient times though it actually meant going to the forest and spending time in a serene place in some hermitage. But in modern times it is neither feasible nor advisable. The best avenue is to withdraw from active role and serve more as an advisor and guide for the next generation in a dispassionate manner.

The final and fourth quarter is called 'Sanyas Ashram' which clearly means absolute withdrawal from the world and its affairs. This is the time when the man is of about say 70 or more years of age. So he needs complete peace and should prepare to make an exit from the world without a fuss. He is expected to create such a situation that no one misses or wails for him nor anything suffers due to his absence. Thus, he dies peacefully and self-contentedly.

During the 'Sanyas Ashram' a person is expected to completely renounce the world and its entanglements, and instead spend the remaining part of his life in spiritual pursuit and searching ways for his spiritual liberation and deliverance.

Now, let us study them in more detail.

(a) Brahmacharya¹—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by

austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation, reflection and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

In brief, the 'Brahmacharis' are celibates students who must exercise the greatest self-restraint in order to concentrate their energy on their studies. It is the first phase of life. The 'Grihastha' is the householder. After study, the student marries to raise a family and contribute to the continuation of the cycle of creation. This marks the second phase of life. The 'Vaan-prastha' is a person who hands over the responsibilities of worldly affairs to his heir and prepares to lead a retired life, literally though the word means to 'retire to the forest'. This is the third phase of life. And finally, the 'Sanyasi' is a person who has renounced the world and spends his time in meditation, reflection and contemplation. This is the fourth and the final phase of life.

The term "Brahmcharaya"—or one who practices the principles of life in accordance to the eclectic philosophy of Brahm-realisation, is very much misunderstood and misquoted. It primarily refers to that part of life when a practitioner exercises exemplary self-control—or "continence"—over his gross organs of the body so that all his energy and attention can be focused on higher goals of life—such as spiritual upliftment and 'self' as well as 'Brahm' realisation. Now, if one allows oneself to indulge in gratifying the urges of the body, a lot of his time and energy would be spent on this activity, leaving him exhausted and weary to the extent that he would have little stamina or will left to pursue higher goals of life.

Worldly indulgences can never give sustainable peace, happiness and bliss; it's like seeking water in a desert mirage. On the other hand, self-restraint that prevents the creature from falling into this trap is 'Brahmacharya'—i.e. practicing the principles of life as practiced by acclaimed ascetics.

Brahmacharya is to live a life that contributes to Brahm-realisation; it is to practice the principles that enable a person to attain success in his pursuit of knowledge of the higher goals of life, to become wise and learned.

Usually the term applies to the first phase of a person's life, the 1st quarter of his life, when he is supposed to spend time studying and imbibing knowledge that would prepare him to face life and the tumble and turmoil of the world. A student who concentrates his mind on his studies will obviously do well and shine in his chosen field as compared to one who spends his time enjoying and fooling around.

Therefore, a person who practices the principles of Brahmacharya thorough out his life becomes empowered with special powers and energy that help him to achieve stupendous feats which his peers who fritter away their internal energy in worldly pursuit and self-indulgence can't hope to achieve.

Brahmacharya is not merely 'celibacy' or control over the sexual urges; it is a comprehensive term encompassing "total self-control" over the tendencies of the gross body consisting of the sense organs of action and perception, as well as the subtle aspects of the body consisting of the mind and heart.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called *Ashramo-panishad* belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Refer also to (i) *Kundiko-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, verse nos. 1-4, which outline these four Ashrams, and then goes on to describe in detail the life and norms to be followed by a Sanyasi in verse nos. 5-17; (ii) *Kathrudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 3 wherein is described the taking of the vows of Sanyas which is a renunciate way of life and the fourth and the last phase in the life of a man. Sanyas prepares him for his final liberation and deliverance from this world.

The Duration of each Ashram—The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 2 states the number of years one Ashram should ideally consist of. According to it, Brahmacharya Ashram lasts for twelve years, Grihastha Ashram for twenty five years, Vanparashtha Ashram for another twenty five years, and then comes the Sanyas Ashram for the rest of one's life.]

मारग सोइ जा कहूँ जोइ भावा । पंडित सोइ जो गाल बजावा ॥ ३ ॥
मिथ्यारंभ दंभ रत जोई । ता कहूँ संत कहइ सब कोई ॥ ४ ॥

māraga sō'i jā kahum̃ jō'i bhāvā. paṇḍita sō'i jō gāla bajāvā. 3.
mithyārambha dambha rata jō'ī. tā kahum̃ santa kaha'i saba kō'ī. 4.

The right course of action was that which caught the fancy of an individual; everyone acted in his own whimsical way, unmindful of whether his actions and deeds were right or wrong.

A person who brags, one who is a hypocrite, who talks loudly and is boastful, is deemed to be an expert, someone who is wise, erudite, sagacious, knowledgeable and talented (a 'paṇḍita'). (3)

Everyone calls a person a 'saint' who openly and without regrets engages in spurious doctrines and unrighteous undertakings, who practices hypocrisy, pretension, boastfulness, show-offs, deceit and conceit.

[To wit, a pervert, corrupt, pretentious and morally depraved person is regarded as a saint in Kaliyug, while those who are true saints are neglected and treated with scepticism.] (4)

सोइ सयान जो परधन हारी । जो कर दंभ सो बड़ आचारी ॥ ५ ॥
जो कह झूठ मसखरी जाना । कलिजुग सोइ गुनवंत बखाना ॥ ६ ॥

sō'i sayāna jō paradhana hārī. jō kara dambha sō baṛa ācārī. 5.
jō kaha jhūmṭha masakharī jānā. kalijuga sō'i gunavanta bakhānā. 6.

A person who can usurp the wealth of others by hook or by crook, who can rob or defraud others by using unscrupulous means, is regarded as being clever and intelligent (in Kaliyug).

A person who is pretentious and deceitful, who uses falsehoods to achieve his objectives, is said to be a traditionalist and a practitioner of established norms and principles. (5)

A person who is expert in telling lies and conjuring up imaginary tales and jokes is deemed to be perfect in talents in the age of Kaliyug. (6)

निराचार जो श्रुति पथ त्यागी । कलिजुग सोइ ग्यानी सो बिरागी ॥ ७ ॥
जाकें नख अरु जटा बिसाला । सोइ तापस प्रसिद्ध कलिकाला ॥ ८ ॥

nirācāra jō śruti patha tyāgī. kalijuga sō'i gyānī sō birāgī. 7.
jākēm nakha aru jaṭā bisālā. sō'i tāpasa prasid'dha kalikālā. 8.

A person who is evil, pervert and corrupt, who has abandoned the path (of life) as prescribed in the Vedas, is regarded as a talented and wise person, one who has inculcated in himself the auspicious virtues of Vairagya (i.e. a person who practices renunciation, detachment and dispassion). (7)

In Kaliyug, a person who keeps long nails and wears a thick mat of unkempt hairs on his head acquires fame as one who practices severe austerities and does hard penance (Tapa)¹. (8)

[Note—¹It has already been said in Chaupai line no. 4 herein above that pretensions, falsehoods, deceit and show-offs would determine the high social and religious stature of persons in Kaliyug. The more pretentious a person is, the more he can use tricks, deceit and conceit to deceive others, the more boastful he is regarding his religious knowledge and spiritual status, the more acclaim he gets as a holy, saintly and a religious man, notwithstanding what the truth about him actually is.]

दो०. असुभ बेष भूषन धरें भच्छाभच्छ जे खाहिं ।
तेइ जोगी तेइ सिद्ध नर पूज्य ते कलिजुग माहिं ॥ ९८ (क) ॥
dōhā.

asubha bēṣa bhūṣana dharēm bhacchābhaccha jē khāhīm.
tē'i jōgī tē'i sid'dha nara pūjya tē kalijuga māhīm. 98 (a).

In Kaliyug, a person who wears odd and unsightly clothes and ornaments, who eats everything and anything without bothering to consider whether or not such things are suitable for eating, is called an honourable ascetic (jōgī), one who is perfect, has mystical powers and is adorable in every respect. (Doha no. 98-a)

सो०. जे अपकारी चार तिन्ह कर गौरव मान्य तेइ ।

मन क्रम बचन लबार तेइ बकता कलिकाल महुँ ॥ ९८ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

jē apakārī cāra tinha kara gaurava mān'ya tē'i.

mana krama bacana labāra tē'i bakatā kalikāla mahum̐. 98 (b).

He whose actions and deeds are marked by malfeasance, he whose conduct harm the interest of others or cause discomfort to them—verily, he is the one who acquires great honour and recognition, he is the one who is held in high esteem by all the people (during Kaliyug).

A person who is an inveterate liar, one who has falsehood deeply imbedded in his genes, one whose mind, deeds and words are characterised by lies and sham—such a person is called a great orator and a skilled speaker during the age of Kaliyug. (Sortha no. 98-b)

चौ०. नारि बिबस नर सकल गोसाईं । नाचहिं नट मर्कट की नाई ॥ १ ॥

सूद्र द्विजन्ह उपदेसहिं ग्याना । मेलि जनेऊ लेहिं कुदाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nāri bibasa nara sakala gōsā'īm. nācahiṁ naṭa markaṭa kī nā'īm. 1.

sūdra dvijanha upadēsahiṁ gyānā. mēli janē'ū lēhiṁ kudānā. 2.

Oh Lord (“gōsā'īm”—i.e. Garud)! All men are under the dominance of women-folk so much so that they (the men) dance to their (women's) tunes like a monkey dances to the tune of its trainer or the monkey-charmer. [Just like a monkey does what its master wants it to do, men obey the women-folk as if they were enslaved to them.] (1)

The Shudras preach the Brahmins about spiritual wisdom and other fields of knowledge (instead of it being the other way round).

They (Shudras) wear the sacred thread (and act like a Brahmin) to accept whatever donations are made to them, irrespective of the worthiness of such alms or gifts. [The Shudras wear the sacred thread to pretend to be respectable Brahmins who are usually given alms and charity by the people as part of religious duty. So, misled by the sacred thread, the people think that the Shudra is a Brahmin, and give donations to them. The Shudras do not hesitate to cheat the people by pretending to be Brahmins and accept charity from them.] (2)

सब नर काम लोभ रत क्रोधी । देव बिप्र श्रुति संत बिरोधी ॥ ३ ॥

गुन मंदिर सुंदर पति त्यागी । भजहिं नारि पर पुरुष अभागी ॥ ४ ॥

saba nara kāma lōbha rata krōdhī. dēva bipra śruti santa birōdhī. 3.
guna mandira sundara pati tyāgī. bhajahim nāri para puruṣa abhāgī. 4.

All men are indulgent in Kaam (passions, lust and longing), Lobha (greed and rapacity) and Krodha (anger; wrathfulness; fury). They oppose Gods, Brahmins (elders and learned men in the society), Vedas (scriptures) and Saints. (3)

The women (of Kaliyug) are so morally corrupt and unfaithful that they abandon their virtuous husbands who are good to them and possess noble character, and instead they establish a liaison with other unscrupulous men, and get emotionally and physically involved with the latter. (4)

सौभागिनीं बिभूषन हीना । बिधवन्ह के सिंगार नबीना ॥ ५ ॥

गुर सिष बधिर अंध का लेखा । एक न सुनइ एक नहिं देखा ॥ ६ ॥

saubhāginīm bibhūṣana hīnā. bidhavanha kē siṅgāra nabīnā. 5.
gura siṣa badhira andha kā lēkhā. ēka na suna'i ēka nahim dēkhā. 6.

It's such an irony of Kaliyug that those women-folk whose husbands are alive do not wear ornaments (because either they can't afford it or they feel shy to wear them), while those women whose husbands have died wear all sorts of colourful decorations and ornamentations of the latest style (as if they have no regrets for their widowhood)¹. (5)

The relationship between a disciple and a preceptor (or teacher and guide) is like that between a deaf person and a blind person respectively. While the one cannot hear (here meaning the disciple who won't pay attention to his teacher or doesn't understand what is being taught to him), the other cannot see (here referring to the preceptor or teacher who has no in depth knowledge, who is not wise, and who himself does not know the path he is trying to show his disciple). (6)

[Note—¹In Hindu society it is an established tradition that those women whose husbands are alive use ornaments and colourful clothes, while widows are expected to shun all sorts of decorations on their bodies as a token of their sadness and grief at having lost their husbands. During Kaliyug there would be so much moral degradation and lack of good manners and ethics in the society that women would take pride in breaking from tradition and sport colourful clothes and attractive ornaments as if to send a signal that they have no regrets at losing their husbands and are now freely available for the next right suitor.]

हरइ सिष्य धन सोक न हरई । सो गुर घोर नरक महँ परई ॥ ७ ॥

मातु पिता बालकन्ह बोलावहिं । उदर भरै सोइ धर्म सिखावहिं ॥ ८ ॥

hara'i siṣya dhana sōka na hara'i. sō gura ghōra naraka mahum' para'i.
mātu pitā bālakanhi bōlāvahim. udara bhara'i sō'i dharma sikhāvahim. 4.

Be warned: a preceptor and moral guide (**gura**) who robs his disciple (**siṣya**) of his wealth but fails to eliminate his ignorance and delusions would certainly fall in the gravest of hells¹. (7)

Parents (**mātu pitā**) call their children and teach them only those skills and crafts which would help their off-springs fill their stomachs². (8)

[Note—¹The primary job of a Guru is to show the correct path to his disciple. He should be therefore fully qualified for it; he should be sincere and diligent in fulfilling his obligations towards the disciple who relies on him and has faith in him. If the Guru fails to fulfil his obligations, and uses deceit and pretensions to extract money from his disciple, exploiting the latter's faith in him, then surely such a Guru is contemptible and worthy of punishment.

²Like the corrupt Guru, even the parents want their off-springs to learn those skills that would enable them to make a comfortable living in this mundane world, acquire money and fame, unmindful of the merit of pursuing a particular line of occupation that may not stand good or fall foul when judged from the angle of it being in accordance with the principles of Dharma. Though a parent is a child's best friend, teacher and well-wisher, but rarely would a parent teach the child about spiritualism, about the principles of Dharma and the necessity of following it, about the importance of such virtues as having devotion for Lord God, practicing nobility and propriety in conduct and thought, renunciation, detachment and dispassion, austerity and penance, charity and magnanimity, forgiveness, mercy and compassion, and other auspicious virtues and values that would help the child spiritually and aide in building his or her character. A parent would endeavour to teach the child to become 'worldly wise' instead of being 'spiritually wise' and attain some spiritual knowledge that would entitle the child to attain internal peace, contentedness and stability in life. The parent is more concerned about the child's material well-being even if it meant sacrificing moral values and spiritual welfare. Every parent wants the off-spring to 'do well in life', and this translates into acquiring a high position in the society as well as worldly fame and wealth. Rarely would a parent bother about the spiritual wealth and the true well-being of the child.]

दो०. ब्रह्म ग्यान बिनु नारि नर कहहिं न दूसरि बात ।

कौड़ी लागि लोभ बस करहिं बिप्र गुर घात ॥ ९९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

brahma gyāna binu nāri nara kahahim na dūsari bāta.

kaurī lāgi lōbha basa karahim bipra gura ghāta. 99 (a).

The men and the women (of Kaliyug) are markedly hypocrites and so highly pretentious that they talk (boastfully and confidently) of nothing else but the Knowledge of Brahm (i.e. the metaphysical knowledge of the Supreme Being; the sublime and subtle form of knowledge pertaining to the truth of the all-pervading and eternal cosmic Consciousness), pretending to be self-realised, wise and enlightened enough as to have high quality of spiritual wisdom and eclectic knowledge of metaphysical principles (that they want to share with others)—but in practice they

have no compunction or regret to stoop so low, out of irresistible greed for some miniscule pecuniary gains, that they would have no second thoughts while killing a Brahmin and their Guru (i.e. an elderly and learned person who may also happen to be their preceptor and spiritual guide)¹. (Doha no. 99-a)

[Note—¹The people of Kaliyug are excessively evil and morally depraved. They boast of being followers of the laws of Dharma, i.e. they go about telling one and all that they are adherents to the principles regarding a righteous way of life as ordained in the scriptures of which they have an expert knowledge.

Even common people would claim that they are well-versed in the esoteric knowledge of Brahm, a knowledge that even great sages and seers could not claim themselves to be perfect in. But the irony is that such people do not practice what they preach—for if they get an opportunity, they won't hesitate to kill even their Guru or a Brahmin if it gives them some pecuniary material benefit.]

बादहिं सूद्र द्विजन्ह सन हम तुम्ह ते कछु घाटि ।
जानइ ब्रह्म सो बिप्रबर आँखि देखावहिं डाटि ॥ ९९ (ख) ॥

bādahim sūdra dvijanha sana hama tumha tē kachu ghāṭi.
jāna'i brahma sō biprabara ām̐khi dēkhāvahiṁ dāṭi. 99 (b).

The Shudras are boastful and they irreverentially argue with the learned Brahmins, questioning how the latter are superior to them. They would challenge and show disrespect to these senior members of the society and ask them 'Are we in anyway inferior to you?'¹

They (the Shudras) deride the Brahmins and scowl at them mischievously by saying 'A person who knows about Brahm is an exalted Brahmin! [Say, can you claim that you have a perfect knowledge of 'Brahm'? Surely you can't as that would be a boastful statement in itself, something a 'Brahm-Gyani', i.e. one who has the knowledge of Brahm, should not make! A true Brahm-Gyani should be humble and unboastful. So you are trapped in your own game: if you say 'yes' then you are boasting, and if you say 'no' then you are not a Brahmin!]' (Doha no. 99-b)

[Note—¹This statement should not be misinterpreted and turned on its head to mean any insult to the Shudras in the modern secular world where everyone is equal in society. The intent and purpose of the Doha is entirely different. The word 'Shudra' in its broader meaning refers to those people who are lowly, evil, dull-witted and uneducated in the society, while the word 'Brahmin' would refer to those people who are learned, wise, intelligent and act as teachers and guides for the society at large. The elements of casteism or racism should not be unnecessarily invoked and injected into the text to create an unwarranted rift and scepticism if we wish to interpret and correctly understand the meaning of the verses and gain something from it.

Wouldn't it be absurd and incredulous—and unacceptable—if an uneducated, evil, stupid and corrupt person challenges a person who is upright, educated and wise to say that they are both equal and therefore the society should give them equal respect and privileges? Who will accept this argument?

²This is a very clever ploy to demean the stature of an elderly and learned person in the society. “Brahm” is such an esoteric, subtle and sublime entity that no one can claim to have a perfect ‘knowledge of Brahm’. Brahm-realisation is possible, but defining and explaining what Brahm actually is by the means of words with their limited scope is well nigh impossible for even the wisest and the most erudite of scholars.

Though theoretically and literally the nomenclature of the learned and wise segment of people of society as ‘Brahmins’ is based on the assumption that they have knowledge of Brahm, but in practice it means that such people who are called Brahmins are better qualified in terms of knowledge of the scriptures, they have a better understanding of the wider principles of metaphysics, spiritualism and Dharma as compared to the other members to whom they act as advisors and guides. The ‘Shudras’ have no such qualifications or abilities or wisdom.

Though both the Brahmin and the Shudra are ‘human beings’, but the similarity ends there. They can’t be treated alike. For instance, a serial murderer or an inveterate liar or a habitual looter can’t be treated with the same respect with which we would treat a person who is noble, righteous, holy and pious just because both of them are ‘humans’; can we? No insult is meant to the Shudras here; this example is just to illustrate the point.

From a broader perspective this Doha means that in Kaliyug people who have nothing to their credit by way of achievement, knowledge, qualities, intelligence or skills would be so jealous and envious of others who have attained some acclaim and success in the society by their sheer knowledge, skill, intelligence, excellent qualities, hard work or enterprise that the former would try every trick that they can think of to deride and make a mockery of the latter.]

चौ०. पर त्रिय लंपट कपट सयाने । मोह द्रोह ममता लपटाने ॥ १ ॥

तेइ अभेदबादी ग्यानी नर । देखा मैं चरित्र कलिजुग कर ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

para triya lampaṭa kapaṭa sayānē. mōha drōha mamatā lapaṭānē. 1.
tē’i abhēdabādī gyānī nara. dēkhā maiṁ caritra kalijuga kara. 2.

Those who covet and lust for other people’s women-folk, those who are deceitful, pretentious and vile, those who are under the influence of delusions and ensnared by attachments, longings and infatuations, those who have ill-will and malice for others, and envy one and all—such people would be deemed to be wise and talented (in Kaliyug). (1)

Such people would also be deemed to be secular and enlightened enough to have a universal view of existence because they treat everyone alike, claiming to have true metaphysical knowledge which envisages that the same Atma resides in all the living beings, and therefore all living beings are alike.

[Kaagbhusund tells Garud—] Well, this is the practice that I have witnessed in all the Kaliyugs I had taken birth in¹. (2)

[Note—¹Ealier in Uttar Kand, Doha no. 96 along with Chaupai line nos. 8 and 10 that precede it, Kaagbhusund has told Garud that he had taken countless births in the form

of different creatures in different ages. Out of these many births, he said that presently he will be describing his experiences of one such age.

Now he says that a similar situation prevailed in all the ages known as Kaliyug in which he had taken birth. To wit, the characters of Kaliyug are more or less the same in every Kalpa.]

आपु गए अरु तिन्हू घालहिं । जे कहूँ सत मारग प्रतिपालहिं ॥ ३ ॥
कल्प कल्प भरि एक एक नरका । परहिं जे दूषहिं श्रुति करि तरका ॥ २ ॥

āpu ga'e aru tinahū ghālahim. jē kahum̐ sata māraga pratipālahim. 3.
kalpa kalpa bhari ēka ēka narakā. parahim jē dūṣahim śruti kari tarakā. 4.

Such people (as described herein above) are themselves fallen and doomed, but the irony is that even those who are following the path of virtuousness, auspiciousness, righteousness and truthfulness too are dragged along with such wicked people to come to their own ruin and be doomed¹. (3)

Those who are non-believers, atheists, agnostics, hypocrites or rely on heresy try all tricks and irrational arguments that they can conjure up to deride, demean and mock at the Vedas and their authority and sanctity. Such people suffer immensely by falling into obnoxious hell and lying there for as long as a Kalpa (i.e. for an interminably long period of time). [The idea is not to show disrespect to the scriptures.] (4)

[Note—¹It's like the case of a rotten apple destroying even the good apples in a basket, or a dead fish ruining the whole pond. It also highlights the negative consequences of bad company.]

जे बरनाधम तेलि कुम्हारा । स्वपच किरात कोल कलवारा ॥ ५ ॥
नारि मुई गृह संपति नासी । मूड़ मुड़ाइ होहिं संन्यासी ॥ ६ ॥

jē baranādhama tēli kumhārā. svapaca kirāta kōla kalavārā. 5.
nāri mu'i gr̥ha sampati nāsī. mūṛa muṛā'i hōhim sann'yāsī. 6.

Even those who are in the lower rung of society and have no trace of spiritual virtues, wisdom or noble qualities in them, such as for instance those who trade in oil, those who are potters, those who are outcastes as they eat flesh of lowly animals such as birds and insects, those who are tribals (uncivilised and uncultured), and those who are distillers of spurious liquor [5]—when the wives of such people of lowly profession and moral values die, or when they fall on bad times and lose their homes or property, they shave-off their own heads and become a Sanyasi (a person who has renounced his attachment with the world and household to become a recluse, a hermit or a monk, claiming that henceforth he would seek self-realisation, walk on the path that would lead him to Brahm-realisation, attain spiritual bliss and peace, and ultimately liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, or attain emancipation and salvation for their soul)¹ [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹To wit, such people had never thought even for a moment in their lives about the importance of having scruples and the need for adherence to proper religious conduct. They had been engrossed neck-deep in their family and household affairs. When their wives die, or due to some misfortune they lose their wealth, then all of a sudden they turn to become ascetics and hermits. To the world it appears that they have become spiritual persons, that spiritual awareness has dawned on them, that they have realised the impermanence of life in this mortal world, that they have developed the grand virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, that they want to attain Brahm-hood by becoming a Sanyasi, that they have found spiritual liberation from all worldly attachments to attain the exalted stature of a Sanyasi.

But this is all falsehood and pretension. The true benefit of Sanyas comes when a person develops true inner renunciation and detachment from the world based on his experiences, close observance and understanding of the true nature of the mortal world and the futility of pursuit of the sense objects of the material world because they never give true happiness and peace. This is in sharp contrast to pursuing the cause of realising the 'Atma', the pure consciousness and the true 'self', which can actually bestow abiding bliss, joy and happiness to the seeker.

Therefore, the desire to accept the vows of Sanyas should be a well-thought and well-considered decision, and not based on some sudden emotional spurt arising from some grief or misfortune. It is because this latter sort of Sanyas would not last for long, for as soon as the effect of grief and loss begin to wane, which would be much sooner rather than latter, the person would regret his decision to take to the path of Sanyas and would begin to yearn for his household and its pleasures and comforts. This would lead him no where; he would gain nothing except derision and scorn in the society. If in the beginning he somehow manages to resist the temptation to abandon Sanyas and return to the world, he would be mentally very upset and constantly on edge as his natural desire to go back home to his old way of life would be extremely strong and so overwhelming that it would rob him of all peace any happiness for which he had abandoned his home to become a Sanyasi in the first place.

Such people as cited here had spent their entire lives in an unholy way, and they can't expect sudden spiritual merit or attainment of salvation and emancipation by donning the external appearance of a Sanyasi due to the death of their wives or some misfortune that befell them, for very soon this grief will fade away. Their old habits would take over them, and they would become utterly miserable.

And then what would happen? They will criticise the path of Sanyas and prick holes in it to discourage even sincere spiritual seekers who wish to follow it.

Worse still, these wicked people who had turned to the holy path of Sanyas just to escape the harsh realities of life but soon realised their mistake, become jealous of true and honest Sanyasis, i.e. those pious and religious people who had taken the vows of Sanyas not out of some compulsion or frustration in the world but out of their free will to attain spiritual bliss and solace, to gain self-realisation through focussed spiritual endeavours that are not distracted by any kind of worldly responsibilities and humdrum affairs of life. So the former 'false Sanyasis' begin to mock and deride even the 'genuine Sanyasis' in order to hide their own incompetencies and frustrations. They would tease and mock other honest followers of the path of Sanyas, saying that they are imposters who pretend to have found spiritual peace and solace by adopting this pious path of Sanyas as it is totally misleading and wrong to claim so because this path cannot give spiritual peace, bliss and solace. To justify their irrational arguments they give their own examples and say that they too had thought that Sanyas would

provide them peace and happiness, but it proved to be otherwise and they are now regretting their decision. Hence to claim that Sanyas has opened the door for spiritual bliss and self-realisation is totally unfounded and heresy.

This sort of fabricated argument would leave genuine Sanyasis also in the lurch and they would also begin to harbour doubts about their own choice of adopting this pious path, wondering if they had done the right thing. This would produce a domino effect that would undermine the authority and the sanctity of the august institution of Sanyas which is a path sanctioned by the scriptures as the one that leads a person to his goal of self-realisation, Brahm-realisation, spiritual peace and bliss, as well as liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

More details about ‘Sanyas’ are given in a note of the “four Ashrams” appended to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 98 herein above. See also the note appended to the following Chaupai no. 7 herein below.]

ते बिप्रन्ह सन आपु पुजावहिं । उभय लोक निज हाथ नसावहिं ॥ ७ ॥

बिप्र निरच्छर लोलुप कामी । निराचार सठ बृषली स्वामी ॥ ८ ॥

tē bipranha sana āpu puṇāvahiṁ. ubhaya lōka nija hātha nasāvahiṁ. 7.
bipra niracchara lōlupa kāmī. nirācāra saṭha bṛṣalī svāmī. 8.

Though they (i.e. the frustrated people who have donned the appearance of a Sanyasi as detailed in Chaupai line nos. 5-6 herein above) don the external appearance of a Sanyasi (but internally are not at all interested in this pious and holy path of spiritual awareness because they would stoop so low that they have no regrets or shame to) they allow themselves to be worshipped and honoured by Brahmins.

Such wicked people ruin both of their worlds with their own hands—on the one hand they destroy their chances of getting some merit by living a respectable life pursuing their assigned duties and keeping their obligations in the world, and on the other hand they do not get any of the spiritual rewards that accrue to a person who has sincerely renounced his attachment with the gross world and pursues the life of a Sanyasi that is expected to lead him Brahm and self realisation. Hence, they are left neither here nor there; they lose whatever little chance they could have to gain some merit in life.¹ (7)

{So much for the Shudras; but the Brahmins too are fallen and no better than the Shudras. Why? This is answered now—}

The Brahmins are illiterates and lack any worthwhile knowledge; they are greedy and rapacious; they are passionate and lustful; they lack character and virtuousness; they are stupid and dumb-witted; they marry low-caste women of loose character and promiscuous nature². (8)

[Note—¹Once a person takes the vow of Sanyas he is deemed to have declared his intention to renounce the world and its temptations. A Sanyasi should lead a humble and austere life when he desires nothing and expects no honour. It is a life of piety and holiness, a life that should practice exemplary good virtues and be mindful of the fact that the world looks up to him as a spiritual guide who would show others how to live righteously and auspiciously.

If such a person yearns for honour and worship, if he allows himself to be praised and worshipped by others, especially by those who are much senior to them in wisdom, knowledge and virtues, such as the Brahmins, then such a person is in all sooth and without gainsay a blot on the august and holy institution of Sanyas.

It would have been far better for him to have stayed back at home and pick up the thread of life after the initial shock of loss of his wife or wealth faded away. But once he has donned the attire of a Sanyasi he must strictly respect the holiness and sanctity that is associated with this way of life. He must never do anything that would bring the entire concept and system of Sanyas to disrepute and disgrace by his lone black-sheep like deeds.

Personally such imposters suffer complete doom in their life. They face the spectre of absolute alienation and disgrace in the society by their unscrupulous and unethical behaviour. People look at them with utter contempt and scorn; they lose whatever goodwill and sympathy that they had managed to garner for themselves when they had declared their intention to renounce the world and take the path of Sanyas. At the same time as losing face in the physical world they also lose all spiritual benefits that accrues to a person who takes the vows of Sanyas—such as spiritual bliss, peace, solace, liberation and deliverance.

²The Brahmins are not good either. Their behaviour makes them far worse than the Shudras. The world does not expect a Shudra to be virtuous and possess excellent characters, but it does expect so from a Brahmin—because he is to act as the society's preceptor, guide and teacher, one who has knowledge and wisdom, one who is upright and virtuous, one who has an exemplary life to act as an example for the rest of the society. But the way the Brahmins act during Kaliyug as enumerated in this Chaupai, they bring disgrace and scorn to this exalted class of people that the scriptures exhort others to respect and honour. Say, who in his right senses would respect a Brahmin with the characters outlined in this verse? Of course, none would!

The evil affects of Kaliyug are underscored in this verse. It spares neither the most lowly like the Shudras, nor the most exalted like the Brahmins. All are so deluded that they become forced to abandon their paths and duties.]

सूद्र करहिं जप तप ब्रत नाना । बैठि बरासन कहहिं पुराना ॥ ९ ॥

सब नर कल्पित करहिं अचारा । जाइ न बरनि अनीति अपारा ॥ १० ॥

sūdra karahim japa tapa brata nānā. baiṭhi barāsana kahahim purānā. 9.
saba nara kalpita karahim acārā. jā'i na barani anīti apārā. 10.

The Shudras do Japa (silent repetition or muttering of verses from the scriptures) and Tapa (penance, austerity) and observe other religious vows; they sit on the high seat of a preacher and narrate the various Purans (ancient scriptures)¹. (9)

All men do whatever suits them and catches their fancy. Verily indeed, the situation that prevails during Kaliyug is so intensely alarming and pathetic that one cannot even describe its gravity and impact fully and correctly. (10)

[Note—¹Normally, this is the duty of the Brahmins: they are supposed to study the Purans and the Vedas and then teach others about their tenets; they are expected to

explain the meaning of the scriptures to the society. But it is an irony and a paradox of Kaliyug that people don't do their assigned duties but rather engage themselves in things they are not supposed or asked to do. The Brahmins won't honour their moral obligations to the society, and the void is filled by the Shudras who have no understanding of the scriptures.

Imagine, what would a Shudra—who has never had the time nor the inclination to study the scriptures deeply in his entire life, but who quickly read some part of the holy text to gain instant fame as a learned man and reap material benefits out of it—preach others from the pulpit? Naturally, whatever information or knowledge of the scriptures such a man would disseminate to others would be a half-baked, half-truth, corrupted and distorted version of the original scripture which would do more harm than any good to his listeners, and this in turn will have a far-reaching negative impact on the society at large. But who bothers in Kaliyug?

In brief, the idea is that all sorts of unorthodox and controversial things that go against established traditions and norms of behaviour would start happening during Kaliyug. Laws, rules and regulations would be undermined and broken with impunity, without fear of repercussions. Morality and ethics would reach a nadir, and haughtiness and recklessness and all things that go against the principles of Dharma would be touching new heights.

People would take pride in breaking the laws of Dharma and undermining the authority of the scriptures, and would have no compunctions in doing what is not sanctioned in the scriptures. Rather, breaking laws and challenging the scriptures and boldly acting in controversial ways would be regarded as virtues because they imply freedom and liberty; doing what is not supposed to be done would be deemed to be one's birth-right that cannot be challenged.]

दो०. भए बरन संकर कलि भिन्नसेतु सब लोग ।

करहिं पाप पावहिं दुख भय रुज सोक बियोग ॥ १०० (क) ॥

dōhā.

bha'ē barana saṅkara kali bhinnasētu saba lōga.

karahiṁ pāpa pāvahiṁ dukha bhaya ruja sōka biyōga. 100 (a).

During the age of Kali (i.e. Kaliyug), there would be so much promiscuity and prevalence of intermarriages that the generations of people so produced would lose their identity and purity of lineage.

The people engage themselves in doing sinful acts and pervert deeds, which produce negative consequences for them. So they suffer interminably from various kinds of sorrows, grief, fears and diseases, as well as the agony of separation from their loved ones and things they hold close to their hearts. (Doha no. 100-a)

श्रुति संमत हरि भक्ति पथ संजुत बिरति बिबेक ।

तेहिं न चलहिं नर मोह बस कल्पहिं पंथ अनेक ॥ १०० (ख) ॥

śruti sammata hari bhakti patha saṅjuta birati bibēka.

tēhiṁ na calahiṁ nara mōha basa kalpahīṁ pantha anēka. 100 (b).

People are so deluded and misled by false doctrines that they do not follow the path of Bhakti for Lord Hari (devotion for Lord God) along with practicing the eclectic path of renunciation and acquisition of spiritual wisdom as espoused by the Vedas.

Instead of following this wise path, the people follow all sorts of imaginary doctrines and create their own sects and philosophies. (Doha no. 100-b)

छं०. बहु दाम सँवारहिं धाम जती । बिषया हरि लीन्हि न रहि बिरती ॥ १ ॥
तपसी धनवंत दरिद्र गृही । कलि कौतुक तात न जात कही ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

bahu dāma samvārahim dhāma jatī. biṣayā hari līnhi na rahi biratī. 1.
tapasī dhanavanta daridra grhī. kali kautuka tāta na jāta kahī. 2.

{In the following Chandas, the strangest of developments and the extreme levels of paradoxes, ironies, oddities and utterly freakishness of behaviour that occur during the period of Kaliyug, that would leave any right thinking person totally flummoxed and confounded, are being enumerated.}

The so-called reclusive persons who have deemed to renounce the world and its material comforts and charms build expensive houses for themselves and furnish these buildings with the choicest of things of pleasure and comfort.

Such imposters as they (who pretend to be reclusive persons and declare that they wish to lead a life like a monk or a hermit but build grandest of homes for themselves) do not have even a whit of the virtue of renunciation, detachment and dispassion in them. The fact is that these virtues have been robbed (i.e. overcome and replaced) by the evil and negative trait of longing for the pleasure and comfort of the sense objects of the material world as well as desire for gratification of their sense organs. (Chanda line no. 1)

Those who are supposed to do Tapa and lead a life like an ascetic (i.e. a life of penance, austerity and renunciation) have become rich, while householders are penniless, suffering from poverty and lack of even basic resources to lead a respectable life of dignity and honour.

Oh my dear (tāta), it is difficult to fully narrate and enumerate the countless inconsistencies, oddities, paradoxes, ironies, strange peculiarities and freak happenings of Kaliyug.

[To wit, oh Garud, I am just giving you an idea of the way morality and principles of a righteousness, the good way of life and the virtuousness of character expected from an individual as described by the scriptures would gradually erode and slide downhill during Kaliyug, giving way to perversion, depravity, corruption and evil tendencies. These dark and obnoxious qualities would gradually cast their shadow and extend their vicious grip over all the inhabitants of this world till a point would be reached when all goodness would be totally eclipsed and Dharma would be buried underground.] (Chanda line no. 2)

कुलवंति निकारहिं नारि सती । गृह आनहिं चेरि निबेरि गती ॥ ३ ॥

सुत मानहिं मातु पिता तब लौं । अबलानन दीख नहीं जब लौं ॥ ४ ॥

kulavanti nikārahim nāri satī. gr̥ha ānahim cēri nibēri gatī. 3.

suta mānahim mātu pitā taba laum̐. abalānana dīkha nahim̐ jaba laum̐. 4.

People force a chaste and loyal woman of good character out of their homes, and replace her by bringing in women of loose character. To wit, people would find excuse to divorce their loyal wives, and throwing all caution to the wind they would bring in servant girls (as sex slaves, to satisfy their lust). (Chanda line no. 3)

A son would obey his parents (mātu pitā) only till the time he has not seen a maiden.

[To wit, once a boy falls in love with a girl, or gets married, his whole life revolves around the lady of his choice. Whereas earlier he would have listened to his parents and discuss things with them, but once he has a woman by his side he becomes so intoxicated by infatuation that his whole attention is pivoted on her, and he would rather lend his ears to her than his mother or father who suddenly become nagging outsiders for him. The parents who were a son's best friend and companion from his birth all of a sudden become intruders in his private life, and even their voice annoys him. When he needs any advice, he would consult his wife or girl-friend instead of his parents.] (4)

ससुरारि पिआरि लगी जब तें । रिपुरूप कुटुंब भए तब तें ॥ ५ ॥

नृप पाप परायन धर्म नहीं । करि दंड बिडंब प्रजा नितहीं ॥ ६ ॥

sasurāri pi'āri lagī jaba tēm̐. ripurūpa kuṭumba bha'e taba tēm̐. 5.

nṛpa pāpa parāyana dharma nahim̐. kari daṇḍa biḍamba prajā nitahim̐. 6.

As for the woman, once she is married and enters her husband's home and gradually develops affectionate relationship with her in-laws, she begins to treat her own kith and kin back home in her parent's place as her virtual enemies (i.e. she soon forgets them; she does not either wish to meet them or have any contact with them).

[Once married, the girl soon forgets the immense sufferings and sacrifices her parents had made for her ever since she was born, for her upbringing and well-being. Like a chameleon she changes colours and begins to treat a family of her in-laws, who till other day was a complete stranger for her, as her own kith and kin. Once she sets foot in her in-law's home a woman forgets her obligation towards her parents and kith and kin who had helped bring her up against the greatest of odds and problems that they might have had to face. She is so selfish that once her needs are taken care of by her husband and his family, she easily forgets about her own parents and her original family, and begins to treat them as if they were all strangers or aliens.]¹ (Chanda line no. 5)

The Kings and rulers of the realm are indulgent in sinful activities; they have no trace of righteousness and noble qualities which they are expected to possess.

They are harsh, inconsiderate, whimsical and reckless; they make their subjects and dependants suffer interminably due to their whims and fancies by inflicting regular punishment on them, even without any rhyme or reason. The

dilemma is that the people within their realm cannot afford to resist them, and so they have to reluctantly submit themselves to the King's or ruler's whims. (Chanda line no. 6)

[Note—¹The idea is that in Kaliyug the moral situation would be so low that both the son and the daughter would forget their obligations to their respective parents. The factor of “Kaam”, passion and lust for the opposite sex, would be so overwhelming that once they get married, both the son and the daughter would all but forget about their parents who had taken so much trouble to bring them up. If a man and a woman can be so ungrateful and unfaithful to his or her parent, one can imagine what sort of loyalty would they have for the so many strangers with whom they come in contact and forge some kind of relationship during the course of their lives, personal or professional, in this selfish world?]

धनवंत कुलीन मलीन अपी । द्विज चिन्ह जनेउ उघार तपी ॥ ७ ॥
नहिं मान पुरान न बेदहि जो । हरि सेवक संत सही कलि सो ॥ ८ ॥

dhanavanta kulīna malīna apī. dvija cinha janē'u ughāra tapī. 7.
nahim māna purāna na bēdahi jō. hari sēvaka santa sahī kali sō. 8.

Rich people who have wealth and resources are treated as being of high birth and given great respect and honour even though they may be fallen, lowly, of a vile character, most corrupt and evil by their inherent nature.

A Brahmin's identity is limited to wearing the sacred thread, and that of an ascetic of remaining naked.¹ (Chanda line no. 7)

In Kaliyug, those who don't believe in the Vedas and the Purans (i.e. those who don't respect and have faith in the scriptures and their sanctity, those who are agnostics, atheists and non-believers)—such people are called devotees of Lord Hari (the Lord God) and true saints². (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹To wit, the people of Kaliyug would be so foolish that they would recognise and respect a person by his external appearances, not bothering to find out whether that person actually deserves such an honour. For instance, a man who is rich gets honour and respect in the world although he may be most corrupt and evil by nature, and has acquired his wealth by the most crooked means one can imagine.

Similarly, a man is respected in Kaliyug and shown honour befitting a holy person such as a Brahmin or an ascetic just because he wears a sacred thread or remains naked respectively, irrespective of the fact that he may be a crook and has no other quality or character worth the name which a Brahmin or an ascetic is expected to possess that would actually entitle him to get any respect and honour.

Since easy honour and pecuniary benefits can be got by pretentious means, no one in Kaliyug bothers about scruples and spiritual values, about inculcating noble virtues and an ideal character. The world would be taken over by such pretentious people who would cheat the society as well as themselves, throwing all precautions and morality to the wind.

Refer also to Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 98 herein above where a similar idea is expressed.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 98 herein above.]

कबि बृंद उदार दुनी न सुनी । गुन दूषक ब्रात न कोपि गुनी ॥ ९ ॥
कलि बारहिं बार दुकाल परै । बिनु अन्न दुखी सब लोग मरै ॥ १० ॥

kabi bṛnda udāra dunī na sunī. guna dūṣaka brāta na kōpi gunī. 9.
kali bārahīm bāra dukāla parai. binu anna dukhī saba lōga marai. 10.

During Kaliyug, there is a proliferation of poets and bards (or talented, literate and learned people) who have grown manifold, but there is a dearth of those who would recognise and reward them (or those who would support talented people financially and by other means).

There is no shortage of those who find fault or prick holes even in good virtues and noble characters, but rare are those who possess any of such virtues and characters themselves. [People would make it their duty to criticise others and find faults in them, but no one would bother to practice even a fraction of goodness they might see in others.] (Chanda line no. 9)

During Kaliyug, there are repeated cycles of famine and drought and other such natural calamities. People come to immense hardships and die due to lack of food and nourishment¹. (Chanda line no. 10)

[Note—¹Doha no. 101 below explains why this happens.]

दो०. सुनु खगेस कलि कपट हठ दंभ द्वेष पाषंड ।
मान मोह मारादि मद व्यापि रहे ब्रह्मंड ॥ १०१ (क) ॥
dōhā.

sunu khagēsa kali kapata haṭha dambha dvēṣa pāṣaṇḍa.
māna mōha mārādi mada byāpi rahē brahmaṇḍa. 101 (a).

Listen, oh King of Birds (sunu khagēsa)! During the age of Kaliyug, hordes of negative qualities and perversities of all conceivable kind—such as falsehood, deceit, conceit, pretensions, stubbornness, enmity, jealousy, heresy, egotism, haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy, attachments, infatuations, longings, passions, lust, and other such degrading and demeaning qualities—would rule the roost, becoming all-pervading and universal in the world. (Doha no. 101-a)

तामस धर्म करहिं नर जप तप ब्रत मख दान ।
देव न बरषहिं धरनीं बए न जामहिं धान ॥ १०१ (ख) ॥

tāmasa dharma karahim nara japa tapa brata makha dāna.
dēva na baraṣahim dharanīm ba'e na jāmahim dhāna. 101 (b).

People would practice the path of Dharma (the way of life as ordained in the scriptures) with ill intent, thereby turning this path into an unholy ritual to attain their worldly objectives. Thus, practicing Japa (repetition of holy Mantras), Tapa (penance and austerity), Vrat (religious vows), Yagya (fire sacrifices) and Daan (making charity) would be done for vested self interests¹.

The Gods (i.e. the forces of Nature) do not shower adequate rains, and the result is that even seeds that have already been sown in the ground do not sprout and produce grains². (Doha no. 101-b)

[Note—¹These are spiritual practices designed to lead a person forward on the path of attaining purity, piety and self-realisation that would ultimately help him to gain liberation and deliverance for himself. But in Kaliyug, people would do them to fulfil their worldly objectives, attain name and fame and wealth. This would be like exploiting the goodness inherent in these spiritual activities for selfish ends, and utilising these spiritual tools to fulfil evil desires. This would corrupt these practices and rob them of their potentials. The net effect would be that instead of doing any good, they would cause harm to their practitioners. It is like the case of 'fire'. Fire is absolutely necessary in the world; it keeps the world warm and cooks food for it. But the same fire would burn the world to ash if played fools with.

²The negative consequences and the curse of Nature for fiddling with the sanctity of these holy practices is that they backfire, and this manifests itself in the form of onslaught of famines and droughts that make people die in hordes.

Refer: Chanda line no. 10 that precedes this Doha no. 101 herein above.]

छं०. अबला कच भूषन भूरि छुधा । धनहीन दुखी ममता बहुधा ॥ १ ॥
सुख चाहिं मूढ़ न धर्म रता । मति थोरि कठोरि न कोमलता ॥ २ ॥
chanda.

abalā kaca bhūṣana bhūri chudhā. dhanahīna dukhī mamatā bahudhā. 1.
sukha cāhahim mūṛha na dharma ratā. mati thōri kaṭhōri na kōmalatā. 2.

Women (of Kaliyug) have no ornaments except their tresses, and they have an enormous appetite (i.e. their passions and desires have no end).

They are always unhappy and suffering from grief and sorrows due to lack of sufficient wealth and endless desires and infatuations¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

These stupid women want happiness, joy and bliss, but unfortunately they have no faith in the principles of Dharma (righteous way of living).

They have little wisdom and wit, but their mind is stubborn and it knows no tenderness (as well as the virtues of patience and resilience). (Chanda line no. 2)

[Note—¹Householders are generally poor in Kaliyug; they lack wealth but their wants and longings have no end. So the women-folk do not find sufficient financial means to satisfy their desires for worldly objects and pleasures. This makes them unhappy

and eternally restless. What is the spin-off of this situation? Well, they would slyly adopt other unscrupulous means to fulfil their desires, and this in turn will mean that they become corrupt and of lose character.]

नर पीड़ित रोग न भोग कहीं । अभिमान बिरोध अकारनहीं ॥ ३ ॥

लघु जीवन संबतु पंच दसा । कलपांत न नास गुमानु असा ॥ ४ ॥

nara pīḍita rōga na bhōga kahīm. abhimāna birōdha akāranahīm. 3.
laghu jīvana sambatu pañca dasā. kalapānta na nāsa gumānu asā. 4.

[Not only the women, but—] Even the men are suffering (in Kaliyug). They have many diseases, and there is no happiness and joy anywhere.

They are proud, egoist, haughty and arrogant. They harbour enmity with others; they hate and oppose each other for no rhyme or reason. (Chanda line no. 3)

Life is very short and may not extend beyond say ten or five years (because many people die of various diseases and due to so many calamities that are natural or man-made). Yet the people are so proud and boastful of themselves and their achievements as though they would live for a hundred years and beyond to enjoy life and its pleasures for eternity¹. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The main idea is that since people would go against the laws of Nature and become sinful and evil, they will have to face consequences of their misdeeds and will suffer interminably. They would be so haughty and arrogant that they would become blind to seeing the truth and deaf to hearing any good advice that is given to them.

The deluding effect of Kaliyug is so marked that inspite of the fact that people see others dying around them every day due to a variety of causes, they think that no harm would come their way and they will live for a hundred or so years to enjoy the world and its pleasures. Inspite of being aware of diseases and sickness spreading their tentacles all around them, they think that they would always remain healthy and be able to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the material world that they yearn for. They think that they will never die.]

कलिकाल बिहाल किए मनुजा । नहिं मानत क्वौ अनुजा तनुजा ॥ ५ ॥

नहिं तोष बिचार न सीतलता । सब जाति कुजाति भए मगता ॥ ६ ॥

kalikāla bihāla ki'ē manujā. nahīm mānata kvau anujā tanujā. 5.
nahīm tōṣa bicāra na sītalatā. saba jāti kujāti bha'ē magatā. 6.

Kaliyug has made people absolutely restless so much so that they have lost their mental bearing and power of reasoning, and behave like mad men. No one respects the sanctity of the relationship of one's daughter or sister. [Morality and ethics have reached such a low nadir that men become slaves of passion, and they forget to maintain the dignity, the decorum and the sanctity of relationship that exists between a father and a daughter, or between a brother and a sister.] (Chanda line no. 5)

People have no contentedness, no patience, no wisdom or wit, and no courtesy and good manners.

[To wit, ill-behaviour and ill-manners are the norm during the evil era of Kaliyug, and so is constant agitation and restlessness due to lack of contentedness that forms the foundation for internal peace and mental stability.]

Everyone, irrespective of their birth and lineage, becomes a beggar. No one hesitates to ask for things not really needed or useful in life.

[To wit, no one bothers about self-respect and honour by remaining contented with whatever one has, and instead they willingly and cheerfully sacrifice their dignity by spreading out their hands before others to take whatever comes for free. No one thinks twice before coming under the burden of obligations by accepting things from others. Even a king would accept gifts like a petty person.] (Chanda line no. 6)

इरिषा परुषाच्छर लोलुपता । भरि पूरि रही समता बिगता ॥ ७ ॥

सब लोग बियोग बिसोक हए । बरनाश्रम धर्म अचार गए ॥ ८ ॥

iriṣā paruṣācchara lōlupatā. bhari pūri rahī samatā bigatā. 7.
saba lōga biyōga bisōka ha'ē. baranāśrama dharma acāra ga'ē. 8.

Jealousy, malice and ill-will, harsh words and biting rebukes, greed and rapacity—all are rampant.

The virtues of having equanimity and composure, of remaining steady and calm in the face of adversities and provocations, have become things of the past and almost forgotten virtues. (Chanda line no. 7)

All the people are overwhelmed by the grief and aggravated sorrows caused by separation from their dear ones (such as bereavement or forceful separation due to circumstances) and things they long for (such as someone snatching their wealth by force, or they being forced to part with their wealth against their wishes).

The principles of conduct and obligation of doing one's assigned duties in accordance with the laws of Dharma that govern the working of the society one belongs to and the phase of one's life (baranāśrama dharma) have all been neglected¹. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 98.]

दम दान दया नहिं जानपनी । जड़ता परबंचनताति घनी ॥ ९ ॥

तनु पोषक नारि नरा सगरे । परनिंदक जे जग मो बगरे ॥ १० ॥

dama dāna dayā nahim jānapanī. jaṛatā parabanācanatāti ghanī. 9.
tanu pōṣaka nāri narā sagarē. paranindaka jē jaga mō bagarē. 10.

No one seems to have restraint over his sense organs; no one seems to give charity selflessly; no one seems to have mercy and compassion; no one seems to be rational and wise.

Stupidity and fraud have become widespread and dominant features. (Chanda line no. 9)

Both the men and the women remain engaged in filling their stomach and earning a livelihood; all people are engrossed in pampering their bodies. [No one at all bothers about the welfare of his or her soul.]

Those who criticise and prick holes in others, those whose pastime is salacious slander and gossip—such people have spread everywhere. (Chanda line no. 10)

दो०. सुनु ब्यालारि काल कलि मल अवगुन आगार ।

गुनउँ बहुत कलिजुग कर बिनु प्रयास निस्तार ॥ १०२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

sunu byālāri kāla kali mala avaguna āgāra.

guna'um̐ bahuta kalijuga kara binu prayāsa nistāra. 102 (a).

[Kaagbhusund said—] Listen, oh the Enemy of Serpents (“byālāri”; Garud)! The age of Kali is virtually an abode of darkness symbolising sins, turpitude, evil and vices.

But inspite of all its shortcomings and drawbacks, all its degeneration, perversities and depravities, Kaliyug has one exceptional worthwhile quality (or kind of a ‘ray of hope at the end of the dark tunnel’)—and it is that during this age a creature is able to get freedom easily from the web of birth and death that is so characteristic of life in this mundane and mortal world. [How this is made possible is explained below in the verses that follow herein below.] (Doha no. 102-a)

कृतजुग त्रेताँ द्वापर पूजा मख अरु जोग ।

जो गति होइ सो कलि हरि नाम ते पावहिं लोग ॥ १०२ (ख) ॥

kṛtajuga trētāṁ̐ dvāpara pūjā makha aru jōga.

jō gati hō'i sō kali hari nāma tē pāvahin̐ lōga. 102 (b).

The spiritual objectives of a creature, and the attainment of liberation and deliverance of his soul from the cycle of birth and death with its accompanying chain of endless horrors and miseries, that could be achieved by making a lot of strenuous efforts such as doing worship (of gods and elements of Nature visualised as deities that symbolised divine forces), various sacrifices and meditation etc. (pūjā makha aru jōga) during the (three) ages that preceded Kaliyug, viz. the Sata Yug, the Treta Yug, and the Dwapar Yug respectively—the same spiritual rewards and the same pristine pure and holy destination for the soul is attainable by the creature simply by relying on the holy name of the Lord God (here referring to the holy and divine name of Lord Ram, the revealed form of the Supreme Being)¹. (Doha no. 102-b)

[Note—¹To wit, an easy method and an easy-to-implement way has been made available to all the creatures in Kaliyug that would help even the most humble and the illiterate of persons to find spiritual peace and bliss as well as freedom from the cycle of transmigration with virtually no effort invested—and it is to rely on the mystical

powers of the holy, the divine and the sacred name of the Lord God to take him across this vast and endless ocean-like world of birth and death.

If one has firm faith in the Lord and his holy name, if one has a firmness of conviction and rock-solid belief in the spiritual powers of the Lord's holy name that it can surely provide emancipation and salvation to the soul, then one can always rely on this name for all his spiritual needs. It is so easy to do it because a spiritual aspirant can remember this name even while going about the affairs of his routine life—and by practice make it his habit to repeat the name every moment of his life. No special qualifications are needed; no special vows are to be kept; no special efforts are to be made; no special time is to be allotted; no money is needed; no external activities of the body are affected; and no worldly job or work or duty suffers by merely remembering the Lord's holy name internally as a matter of habit.

But by inculcating this simple and harmless habit of remembering the Lord's holy name in Kaliyug, a creature achieves such astounding success in attaining his spiritual goal of finding liberation and deliverance for himself that all the other negativities associated with this age are put aside and forgotten when compared to this priceless boon so unique to Kaliyug, a character that no other age or era has.]

चौ०. कृतजुग सब जोगी बिग्यानी । करि हरि ध्यान तरहिं भव प्रानी ॥ १ ॥

त्रेताँ बिबिध जग्य नर करहीं । प्रभुहि समर्पि कर्म भव तरहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

kr̥tajuga saba jōgī bigyānī. kari hari dhyāna tarahim bhava prānī. 1.
trētām̐ bibidha jagya nara karahim. prabhuhi samarpi karma bhava tarahim.
2.

{Now, Kaagbhusund briefly enumerates the unique qualities and characters of the people during the four ages known as Sata Yug, Treta Yug, Dwapar Yug and Kaliyug.}

In the age known as 'Sata Yug' (which is the first of the four-yug cycle that constitutes one round of creation and destruction), more or less everyone was like an ascetic; they were wise, self-realised, enlightened and had spiritual wisdom.

During this period, a Jiva (a creature; a living being) could cross the vast and fathomless ocean-like world of transmigration (the endless cycle of birth and death) by meditating upon Lord Hari (the Supreme Being's cosmic all-pervading form)¹. (1)

In the next era known as 'Treta Yug', men used to do various kinds of fire sacrifices and meritorious deeds. They attained liberation and deliverance (from the cycle of transmigration) by doing all such sacrifices and meritorious deeds selflessly and then offering whatever rewards that accrued due to such activities to the Lord God.

[Since people did not wish to accept and enjoy any reward for their sacrifices they did, and offered all rewards of spiritual practices to the Lord God, their 'Parent', so when they died their soul did not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death to enjoy the rewards that had been accumulated and become due to them by the virtue of their doing fire and other sacrifices during their previous life. Thus, at the time of death of the physical body, their soul got emancipation and salvation.]² (2)

[Note—¹During Sata Yug, the element of ‘Sata’ or Truth was ubiquitous. The general populace was so extremely wise, self-realised and enlightened that they could understand that there is no ‘truth’ in the grossness of the surrounding world and life in it. Who would want ‘false’ things; who would pursue ‘false’ happiness? So such people focussed on finding the aspect of life which was the ‘real Truth’. Hence they meditated and contemplated in search of this Truth. They meditated because the ‘truth’ they wished to find could not be searched and found in the external world which was soaked in falsehood.

Failing to find true happiness, true peace and true bliss in the external gross world by all means they could employ and think of, they finally decided to use the tool of doing meditation, reflection and contemplation. This quest for the ‘truth’ using these tools led them inwards to their ‘Atma’ which they found was ‘pure consciousness’. Once this discovery was made, they erupted in joy even as they experienced a sudden spurt of contentedness, bliss and ecstasy springing up from their inner self, from their own heart.

When such enlightened souls delved into the matter more deeply and analysed available data like a modern scientist does, they discovered to their amazement and joy that the Atma which they had realised as dwelling inside them is the same Atma that pervades the entire creation; that it is a cosmic entity rather than an entity limited to their individual self. They realised that their own Atma is also called the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Atma that is also known as “Lord Hari” at the cosmic level of creation. To wit, they realised that what their own Atma is as the microcosmic level of creation, the Parmatma known as Hari is at the macrocosmic level.

The natural corollary to this was that they realised the truth that there is really no difference between their own ‘true self’ represented by the Atma, and Lord Hari who represents the cosmic form of the Supreme Atma. They were the one and the same entity, albeit existing at different levels of creation.

Thus, meditation, reflection and contemplation led the people of Sata Yug attain Lord Hari. The positive effect of this was that they found freedom from the web of falsehoods associated with the notion that the gross physical body of a creature is his true identity, and the world in which this body lives is a reality. This realisation in turn provided them with spiritual liberation and deliverance, and attainment of the ‘Truth’—i.e. realisation of the spiritual goal of oneness of the individual’s Atma with the cosmic Atma known as Lord Hari or the Parmatma.

²The general rule-of-thumb in the metaphysical realm is that a creature’s soul or Atma—which in reality is ‘pure consciousness’ and the living being’s ‘true identity and self’ as opposed to his gross body which is simply an external cloak that the subtle-and-sublime Atma has to don in order to live in a world that is also gross like the body—has to return and take a new birth after his body dies at the end of its tenure if the dying creature has any desire unfulfilled at the time of the body’s demise.

During Treta Yug, the people were highly wise and enlightened, so they understood this eclectic and esoteric spiritual Truth. They did not harbour any desires when they died, and so their souls did not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death.

Meanwhile, the fire sacrifices that they did during their lifetime helped them burn all residual sins and vices that could have acted as a burden or fetter on their soul and drag it back or keep it bound to the cycle of birth and death. Hence, freedom was a obvious outcome, it was a natural corollary.]

द्वपर करि रघुपति पद पूजा । नर भव तरहिं उपाय न दूजा ॥ ३ ॥
कलियुग केवल हरि गुन गाहा । गावत नर पावहिं भव थाहा ॥ ४ ॥

dvāpara kari raghupati pada pūjā. nara bhava tarahim upāya na dūjā. 3.
kalijuga kēvala hari guna gāhā. gāvata nara pāvahim bhava thāhā. 4.

During the age of Dwapar (the third era), men could cross over the vast ocean-like world of birth and death by offering worship, reverence and homage to the holy feet of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram). There was no other alternative way or option¹. (3)

Finally, during Kaliyug, it is simply by singing and narrating the divine glories of Lord Hari (Lord Ram) that men can find the end of (i.e. cross) the huge and seemingly endless ocean symbolising the cycle of birth and death². (4)

[Note—¹As time passed, the excellent virtue known as the ‘Sata Guna’, which stood for the brilliance of Truth, was gradually overshadowed and eclipsed by the rise of negative qualities known as ‘Tama Guna’ which symbolised the darkness of delusions and its accompanying spiritual taints. This transition was a very gradual process—much like the way the full moon’s brilliant disc slowly reduces in brightness during the fortnight of its waning phase, and finally vanishes in the void of darkness.

If the ‘full moon’ is likened to the Sata Yug, the Treta Yug would represent the moon with a quarter of its bright disc hidden from view, the Dwapar Yug to the half moon, and the Kaliyug to the last quarter of the moon when it looks so dark and gloomy that inspite of being present in the sky it does not lend any light to its surroundings, till the time the moon completely vanishes from sight symbolising the end of ‘one cycle of four Yugs’ when there is all round destruction of the Sata element that had kept the world illuminated with the light of ‘Truth’.

Hence, in Dwapar Yug people were less wise and enlightened as compared to the two previous Yugs. Doing meditation and fire sacrifices were beyond their abilities and capacities. What next best thing they could do to achieve the same spiritual objective was to worship the Lord God and pay respect to the Lord’s holy feet. For doing this they did not need skills and concentration of the mind needed to do meditation, reflection and contemplation, and neither did they need much of a knowledge of the scriptures or do elaborate exercises or possess wealth and resources as would be required for doing fire sacrifices.

²To wit, during Kaliyug one can easily find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration by simply singing hymns praising the glories of Lord Hari—or Lord Ram. No knowledge of the Vedas or Purans is necessary; no need to engage in strenuous and elaborate exercises.

The easy method for attaining spiritual bliss and peace during Kaliyug is to sing the hymns of Lord Ram.]

कलियुग जोग न जग्य न ग्याना । एक अधार राम गुन गाना ॥ ५ ॥
सब भरोस तजि जो भज रामहि । प्रेम समेत गाव गुन ग्रामहि ॥ ६ ॥
सोइ भव तर कछु संसय नाही । नाम प्रताप प्रगट कलि माहीं ॥ ७ ॥
कलि कर एक पुनीत प्रतापा । मानस पुन्य होहिं नहिं पापा ॥ ८ ॥

kalijuga jōga na jagya na gyānā. ēka adhāra rāma guna gānā. 5.
 saba bharōsa taji jō bhaja rāmahi. prēma samēta gāva guna grāmahi. 6.
 sō'i bhava tara kachu sansaya nāhīm. nāma pratāpa pragaṭa kali māhīm.
 kali kara ēka punīta pratāpā. mānasa pun'ya hōhīm nahīm pāpā. 4.

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, in Kaliyug there is no (need for doing) Yoga (meditation), Yagya (fire and other sacrifices), and Gyan (having spiritual knowledge, being self-reaslied, acquiring wisdom and enlightenment).

The only source of spiritual succour and solace, the only basis by which one can derive joy and happiness is to sing hymns in praise of Lord Ram and his divinity, holiness and glories¹. (5)

Anyone who abandons all other hopes and stops relying on any other means to attain his spiritual objectives, and instead relies solely on worshipping Lord Ram and affectionately singing the Lord's hymns and glories --- (6)

--- Such a person is sure to cross this ocean-like world of birth and death; there is no doubt about it. [To wit, if a person relies only on worshipping Lord Ram and affectionately singing the hymns dedicated to the Lord that extol the Lord's glories, divinity and holiness, then it is sure that he will find liberation and deliverance for himself. He will not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death.]

Forsooth and without gainsay, the astounding mystical powers that are inherent in Lord Ram's Name, and the spiritual significance of this holy, divine and sacred Name, is very evident and clearly manifested in the age of Kaliyug (more than any of the other three Yugs). (7)

[The above—i.e. the revelation of the stupendous powers and spiritual importance of Lord Ram's holy name—is one of the few excellent qualities and features of Kaliyug. There is another one though. And it is this—]

There is one more wonderful and unique quality or glory of Kaliyug (that none of the other Yugs possessed)—and it is that during this age even if a person's mind and heart (i.e. his Mana) wishes to do some meritorious deed (though he may not be actually able to do it), he still gets the credit of it as if he has physically done that good deed.

On the other hand, if a person merely thinks or wishes of doing some evil deed but actually does not do it, then the sin and taint (and therefore the punishment) associated with such bad or evil deed would not accrue to him². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, doing Yoga and Yagya and acquisition of Gyan would be difficult in Kaliyug. There is no need to waste energy and resources in their pursuit either. Whatever benefit they would give to the seeker is available to him simply by blissfully remembering Lord Ram and enjoying the delight that comes by singing the Lord's glories.

²It's a really win-win situation. The greatness and merit of Kaliyug is highlighted in these verses. In spite of all its blights, Kaliyug has two wondrous qualities—The first is that the greatest of spiritual rewards one can ever hope to get in one's life can be had simply by having affection for Lord Ram and taking refuge in the holy name of the Lord. And the second quality of Kaliyug is that if one has noble thoughts and

pious desires but is unable to actually carry out his plans and implement them in the world, he would still get credit for his virtuous way of thinking.

The intent is straightforward. A wise person is one who can gain credit balance to his spiritual account even without investing any effort by just harbouring good thoughts. This facility has been granted in Kaliyug because the situation all around would be so fearsome and foreboding that ordinary people would find it extremely difficult to do any good thing. So they are now encouraged to do it at least mentally; at the mental level if not at the physical level.

This incentive that a person would gain merit by harbouring noble thoughts and having auspicious desires is to ensure that a person would at least keep his mind and heart free from the sins, evils, vices, turpitude and perversity so ubiquitous in Kaliyug in the hope of accumulating some spiritual merit. Otherwise there are fair chances that all the people would be sucked in the vortex of sins and find it easy to flow with the current of vices so strong in Kaliyug because this is the easy way to live in the absence of any incentives to resist the countless temptations that overwhelm him at all times of his life during the predominately evil age of Kaliyug.

Now, there is another angle to this idea of the importance of having good thoughts. Since no one is perfect, a man may fear that if harbouring good thoughts would bring in merit and reward to him, no matter how invisible and subtle they are, then it is natural that bad thoughts would bring in demerit or punishment to him. To reassure a person who is in such a doubt, that he need not fear on this count, this immunity is provided that merely thinking of some stray bad thing will not cancel out his credit balance, for unless he actually does something that is evil and sinful, unless he carries out his sinful thoughts in practice, no demerit or punishment will become due to him.]

दो०. कलिजुग सम जुग आन नहिं जौं नर कर बिस्वास ।

गाइ राम गुन गन बिमल भव तर बिनहिं प्रयास ॥ १०३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

kalijuga sama juga āna nahim̐ jaur̐n nara kara bisvāsa.

gā'i rāma guna gana bimala bhava tara binahim̐ prayāsa. 103 (a).

There is no other age as compared to Kaliyug if a person has faith in its rare virtues and capabilities (i.e. its ability to provide a person with the chance to attain his spiritual objectives most easily as has been enumerated in the foregoing verses herein above).

And one such rare ability or boon that Kaliyug possesses is this: A person can easily cross this vast and endless ocean-like world of transmigration known as 'Bhava' by simply singing (remembering, reciting and hearing) the divine glories and holy praises of Lord Ram.

[To wit, by simply remembering the sacred story of Lord Ram that describes the Lord's glories and the deeds done by him during his sojourn in the mortal world, and understanding the hidden spiritual message that this story contains, a seeker can attain spiritual joy, happiness, blessedness and beatitude that would have required him to undertake many elaborate rituals and strenuous efforts in all other eras that preceded Kaliyug.] (Doha no. 103-a)

प्रगट चारि पद धर्म के कलि महुँ एक प्रधान ।
जेन केन बिधि दीन्हें दान करइ कल्याण ॥ १०३ (ख) ॥

pragaṭa cāri pada dharma kē kali mahum̐ ēka pradhāna.
jēna kēna bidhi dīnhēm̐ dāna kara'i kalyāna. 103 (b).

There are said to be four pillars or pedestals of Dharma—i.e. there are four ways in which one can gain spiritual merit. [These four ways are (i) Satya—truthfulness; (ii) Daya—mercy and compassion; (iii) Tapa—austerity and penance; and (iv) Daan—making charity and giving alms.]¹

In Kaliyug, the one pillar that is deemed to be the chief one is the act of doing 'Daan'—i.e. giving alms and making charity selflessly as a means of getting spiritual rewards or accumulating spiritual merit. No matter in which way one does 'Daan', it would always serve him in good stead², it would always be conducive for his spiritual good and welfare. (Doha no. 103-b)

[Note—¹Refer to: Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, 12/3/18, which lists these four as being the four pedestals of Dharma.

In the same vein, there are said to be four ways in which a creature accumulates 'spiritual demerit'. These are said to be the four pillars or pedestals of 'A-dharma', i.e. the opposite of 'Dharma'. They are—(i) Asatya Bhasan—speaking a lie; falsehood; (ii) Hinsa—violence; (iii) Trishna or Asantosh—never ending desires and wants; lack of contentedness; (iv) Dwesh or Kalaha—having enmity, jealousy, ill-will and malice for one and all. Refer: Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, 12/3/20.

²Even from the perspective of doing anything for some worldly gain, a person who does charity is honoured and respected by others in the society. It helps to hide or veil many of his other faults, and he acquires a lot of goodwill and a good name for himself in this world. There is so much happiness in the 'act of giving' that one who engages in it discovers a level of inner peace, joy and contentedness that no other single act would give him.]

चौ०. नित जुग धर्म होहिं सब केरे । हृदयँ राम माया के प्रेरे ॥ १ ॥

सुद्ध सत्व समता बिग्याना । कृत प्रभाव प्रसन्न मन जाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nita juga dharma hōhim̐ saba kērē. hṛdayam̐ rāma māyā kē prērē. 1.
sud'dha satva samatā bigyānā. kṛta prabhāva prasanna mana jānā. 2.

The characteristic features and qualities of each Yug (era) reveal themselves in the form of the behaviour and the attitude of its inhabitants as their hearts are motivated or inspired to act in a specific way in accordance with the wishes of Lord Ram's Maya (i.e. the Lord's powers to create delusions) during that period of time¹. (1)

During the first of the four-Yug cycle, i.e. during the Sata Yuga, the characteristic features are purity and truthfulness, equanimity and evenness, true knowledge and spiritual wisdom, and happiness and contentedness of the Mana (mind and heart)². (2)

[Note—¹The Maya of the Lord influences the heart of the creature and motivates him to act in a particular way that is characteristic of a given Yug. There are three Gunas or qualities which govern the behaviour and attitude of all living beings. These three Gunas are known as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. They are invariably present in all the living beings in this world, but their ratio or proportion differs from individual to individual. The greater is the quantum of the Sata Guna in a person, the more inclined would he be towards following the path of spiritualism, wisdom, truth, righteousness, probity and a moral way of life. On the other hand of the scale, the greater is the dominance of the Tama Guna, the greater is the propensity for committing evil deeds, indulging in sins, vices, immorality and degrading actions. The Raja Guna acts as the oil of the machinery that keeps the person on the move on the path of his choice in this world; it is this Raja Guna that motivates a creature to get involved in worldly activities. So, if the Raja Guna is associated with a greater amount of the Sata Guna, the creature is inclined to do good things in life because this is the character of the Sata Guna. On the other hand, if the Tama Guna is in greater proportion, then the same Raja Guna propels the creature towards doing evil things in life because this is the character of the Tama Guna. When Kaliyug reaches its zenith, the Tama Guna will be so overriding and overwhelming that all goodness associated with Sata Guna would be totally eclipsed, and its place would be occupied by the worst of characters that one can imagine.

²Now, as we see, during Sata Yug, the ‘Sata Guna’, i.e. the best of the qualities that one can hope to acquire, is the dominant factor and the motivator for all the living beings. And therefore, this age is very holy, pious and peaceful. It gives its inhabitants a lot of joy and happiness, and there is contentedness and fulfilled wishes all around, there is a lot of wisdom, spiritual awareness, truthfulness, probity and righteousness, and all other characteristics that define the rewards that accrue by following the path of ‘Dharma’.]

सत्त्व बहुत रज कछु रति कर्मा । सब बिधि सुख त्रेता कर धर्मा ॥ ३ ॥

बहु रज स्वल्प सत्त्व कछु तामस । द्वापर धर्म हरष भय मानस ॥ ४ ॥

satva bahuta raja kachu rati karmā. saba bidhi sukha trētā kara dharmā. 3.
bahu raja svalpa satva kachu tāmasa. dvāpara dharma haraṣa bhaya mānasa.
4.

[Now, the characteristic features of the second era known as ‘Treta Yug’ are being enumerated.] When the Sata Guna still is the dominant factor (though not as strong and powerful as it was during the Sata Yug), when there is a little bit of Raja Guna (which motivates a creature to indulge in worldly activities and enjoy its material sense objects), when one finds interest and gets joy in doing one’s worldly deeds, and when there is an overall environment of comfort, pleasure and happiness—then these features are said to be characters of Treta Yug. (3)

[Gradually and almost imperceptibly, the decline and degradation sets in.] So, when the Raja Guna becomes ascendant and more dominant as compared to the Sata Guna which is on the decline as it is reduced to being merely a feeble image of its robust past and is almost sidelined, when Tama Guna starts emerging and making its presence felt, when the Mana (mind and heart) has both happiness and fears (as compared to the previous age when there was no spiritual fear of any kind—such as the fear of death, the fear of sufferings caused by emerging unrighteousness, sins and evil tendencies, etc.)—these are said to be the characters or characteristic features of the third age known as ‘Dwapar Yug’. (4)

तामस बहुत रजोगुन थोरा । कलि प्रभाव बिरोध चहुँ ओरा ॥ ५ ॥
बुध जुग धर्म जानि मन माहीं । तजि अधर्म रति धर्म कराहीं ॥ ६ ॥

tāmasa bahuta rajōguna thōrā. kali prabhāva birōdha cahum'ōrā. 5.
budha juga dharma jāni mana māhīm. taji adharma rati dharma karāhīm. 6.

During the fourth age known as ‘Kaliyug’, there is a predominance of the Tama Guna (the darkness and grossness of character of all living beings marked by all varieties of evil, sins, vices and everything that is in-auspicious and un-righteous) while the Raja Guna is on the decline and reduced to a fraction of its earlier form, when there is enmity, hatred, opposition and ill-will all around—then this should be regarded as being the character of Kaliyug and its effect.

[To wit, during Kaliyug, all the creatures would be affected by Tama Guna and lose their happiness and peace of mind. There would be restlessness and anxiety; no one will have any kind of peace.] (5)

Those who are really wise and intelligent realise that these features are inherent characters of this age (of Kaliyug). So they have patience, and remain calm and poised internally; they take diligent care to follow the path of Dharma and refrain from doing anything that falls under the opposite path called Adharma¹. (5)

[Note—¹Wise and intelligent person don't get agitated when they see so much restlessness, sorrows, fears, uncertainties and depravity all around them. They understand that it is a normal thing in the age of Kaliyug. So instead of getting perturbed and anxious, they maintain their calm and peace of mind, and resisting all temptations and destructions they are careful in what they do themselves in order to remain steadfast on their spiritual path and their aim of life, which is to find freedom from the cycle of birth and death, and attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. They do all they can do to remain free from falling into to trap of Kaliyug in which the rest of the creatures have fallen.

They know the difference between ‘Dharma’ and ‘Adharma’ as explained in Doha no. 103-b herein above, and guard themselves accordingly.]

काल धर्म नहिं व्यापहिं ताही । रघुपति चरन प्रीति अति जाही ॥ ७ ॥
नट कृत बिकट कपट खगराया । नट सेवकहि न व्यापइ माया ॥ ८ ॥

kāla dharma nahim byāpahim tāhī. raghupati carana prīti ati jāhī. 7.
naṭa kṛta bikaṭa kapaṭa khagarāyā. naṭa sēvakahi na byāpa'i māyā. 8.

[It is to be noted here that—] Those who have great devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram, they are not affected or influenced by any of the negative traits of Kaliyug; they are immune to the bad effects of Kaliyug. (7)

Oh the King of Birds (“khagarāyā”—i.e. Garud)! The way a puppet dances and acts on stage fills the spectators with wonder and astonishment, but the puppeteer is not at all affected by it¹. (8)

[Note—¹The puppeteer knows very well that the puppet has no life of its own and therefore does nothing. It is merely doing what the puppeteer makes it do by manipulating the strings. So he goes about his job dispassionately and in a professional way. Likewise, those who are wise and intelligent do not get disturbed by the maverick tricks of Kaliyug because they know that all these tricks are being done by Lord Ram's Maya. So they quietly continue on their spiritual path with a calm mind and heart even as they show respect to the ‘puppeteer’ and wonder at his extraordinary skills. Here, the ‘puppeteer’ is Lord Ram who manipulates the world through the ‘string’ of delusions known as his Maya.]

दो०. हरि माया कृत दोष गुन बिनु हरि भजन न जाहि ।
भजिअ राम तजि काम सब अस बिचारि मन माहि ॥ १०४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

hari māyā kṛta dōṣa guna binu hari bhajana na jāhim.
bhaji'a rāma taji kām saba asa bicāri mana māhim. 104 (a).

Whatever that has been created by the powers of Maya of Lord Hari (i.e. whatever delusions that exist in this world), whether they are for good or bad, none of them can be controlled, overcome or got rid of without worshipping Lord Hari.

[This is because Lord Hari is the Master Puppeteer, and if someone wants to stop the puppet from doing anything that annoys him, he will have to request the puppeteer and not the lifeless puppet. So, if a person wants that delusions do not disturb him and leave him alone, he would have to request Lord Hari, the Lord of the Maya, to instruct this Maya to stop bothering him.]

Keeping this in mind, a wise person is he who worships Lord Ram selflessly, without having any expectations of reward or gains of any kind, and without asking the Lord to fulfil any worldly desires. [This is because if a person prays to Lord Ram to fulfil some worldly desire, then he is willingly allowing himself to fall in the trap of Maya. The Lord will surely fulfil his desires, but in the process the person gets sucked in the temptations of the material world and its endless allurements inasmuch as one desire leads to another, and consequently the grip of Maya gets firmer and firmer on this person.] (Doha no. 104-a)

तेहि कलिकाल बरष बहु बसेउँ अवध बिहगेस ।

परेउ दुकाल बिपति बस तब मैं गयउँ बिदेस ॥ १०४ (ख) ॥

tēhiṁ kalikāla baraṣa bahu basē'um'avadha bihagēsa.
parē'u dukāla bipati basa taba mairi gaya'um'bidēsa. 104 (b).

Oh the King of Birds (bihagēsa)! Coming back to my story of my previous birth, I stayed in Ayodhya for many years during the age of Kaliyug as described above.

Once there was a grave famine in that place, and stricken by adversity and its accompanying misery I left that place and went elsewhere¹. (Doha no. 104-b)

[Note—¹There is no wonder famines and droughts and other natural calamities would occur during Kaliyug. When there is sin all around, Mother Nature punishes the creatures by way of famine and drought and plague and other rapidly spreading killer contagious diseases.

One must note the stark difference of the situation that prevailed in Ayodhya first during the reign of Lord Ram during the Treta Yug, and then during the time when Kaagbhusund lived there during Kaliyug. While during Kaliyug there was a great famine in Ayodhya, during the reign of Lord Ram the same place had no shortage of anything—there was abundance of rain and crop, and everyone lived a contented and happy life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23.]

चौ०. गयउँ उजेनी सुनु उरगारी । दीन मलीन दरिद्र दुखारी ॥ १ ॥

गएँ काल कछु संपति पाई । तहँ पुनि करउँ संभु सेवकाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gaya'um'ujēnī sunu uragārī. dīna malīna daridra dukhārī. 1.
ga'ēm'kāla kachu sampati pāī. taham'puni kara'um'sambhu sēvakāī. 2.

[Kaagbhusund said to Garud—] Oh the Enemy of Serpents (uragārī)! Listen. Feeling utterly miserable, being overcome with distress, suffering from extreme poverty and overwhelmed with sorrow, I had to (leave Ayodhya and) go to Ujjain. (1)

I abided there for some time and managed to acquire some wealth. So I decided to continue living there and began serving (or worshipping) Lord Shambhu (i.e. Lord Shiva, who is the patron deity of this place)¹. (2)

बिप्र एक बैदिक सिव पूजा । करइ सदा तेहि काजु न दूजा ॥ ३ ॥

परम साधु परमारथ बिंदक । संभु उपासक नहिं हरि निंदक ॥ ४ ॥

bipra ēka baidika siva pūjā. kara'i sadā tēhi kāju na dūjā. 3.
parama sādhu paramāratha bindaka. sambhu upāsaka nahim hari nindaka. 4.

At that place (Ujjai) there used to live a Brahmin who used to regularly worship and offer obeisance to Lord Shiva according to the established way as prescribed in the Vedas. This was his daily routine, and he engaged himself in doing nothing else. (3)

He was extremely pious and holy man who was an ardent follower of the path of true spiritual knowledge that leads to liberation and deliverance of the soul. Though he was a sincere devotee of Lord Shiva, but he never spoke anything against Lord Hari (Vishnu)¹. (4)

[Note—¹He was a wise man who was highly enlightened and knew the truth that there is no difference between Lords Shiva and Vishnu as both are different manifestations of the same Supreme Being known as Brahm, he respected both the Lords. So, though he was a ‘Shaivite’, i.e. a person whose deity is Lord Shiva, but he never insulted either Lord Vishnu or any of his followers who are known as ‘Vaishnavs’.]

तेहि सेवउँ मैं कपट समेता । द्विज दयाल अति नीति निकेता ॥ ५ ॥
बाहिज नम्र देखि मोहि साई । बिप्र पढ़ाव पुत्र की नाई ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi sēva'um^ṁ mairṁ kapaṭa samētā. dvija dayāla ati nīti nikētā. 5.
bāhija namra dēkhi mōhi sāl'īm. bipra paṛhāva putra kī nāl'īm. 6.

I used to serve him, but I was cunning and driven by selfishness of heart and impurity of mind. On the other hand, that Brahmin was very compassionate and kind, and was an abode of virtues of righteousness and probity. (5)

Oh Lord (“sāl'īm”—i.e. Garud)! When the simple-hearted and pious Brahmin saw my pretensions of politeness and eagerness to serve him, he was gracious enough to (neglect my internal cunningness and wickedness, and instead he used to) treat me like his son, and taught me with a lot of care and affection¹. (6)

[Note—¹The Brahmin was a saintly soul and an experienced person. So he must have obviously noticed my internal wickedness, but he never showed it outwardly. As I used to serve him and showed my eagerness to study under him, as well as to learn how to worship Lord Shiva, he welcomed me and showed affection to me instead of scolding me for playing tricks with him, and chasing me away.

Kaagbhusund was only interested in finding out how Lord Shiva is to be properly worshipped, and he had no real intention either to serve the Brahmin or gain knowledge of the scriptures from him, or benefit from his knowledge and wisdom in any other way. To create a good impression on the simple-hearted Brahmin, he pretended to be a faithful disciple who serves his Guru diligently and humbly. But this was only so that the Brahmin would teach him what he wished to learn. As we read on we shall see that once Kaagbhusund came to know the Mantra of Lord Shiva, he defied his Guru, or moral preceptor and teacher, and even went to the extent of insulting and disobeying him. This is why he is called ‘selfish, cunning and wicked’ here.

Nevertheless, the qualities of the Brahmin described here are the qualities of true saints. They find it hard to treat anyone harshly, are always ready to help others by trying to fulfil their wishes, and are always loving and forgiving towards even a

wicked person who comes to them asking for something though they are aware that he would become a nuisance for them later on.]

संभु मंत्र मोहि द्विजबर दीन्हा । सुभ उपदेस बिबिध बिधि कीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥

जपउँ मंत्र सिव मंदिर जाई । हृदयँ दंभ अहमिति अधिकाई ॥ ८ ॥

sambhu mantra mōhi dvijabara dīnhā. subha upadēsa bibidha bidhi kīnhā. 7.
japa'umṁ mantra siva mandira jā'ī. hrdayamṁ dambha ahamiti adhikā'ī. 8.

That noble Brahmin gave me the Mantra of Lord Shambhu (Shiva)¹; he preached and taught me in various ways. (7)

Having learnt the Mantra from him, I used to go to a temple of Lord Shiva and did Japa with that Mantra. [I used repeat the Mantra, and reflect and meditate on Lord Shiva while sitting in a Shiva temple.]

Despite apparently being a devotee of Lord Shiva and meditating upon him, I did not lose my internal wickedness. On the other hand, pretension, deceit, ego and arrogance increased in my heart (because I thought that no one worships Lord Shiva as correctly, properly, sincerely and diligently as I do). (8)

[Note—¹A Mantra of a deity is a special spiritual formula consisting of letter, words or phrases that are specific to that deity. Essentially they symbolise the deity's cosmic form and energy. This Mantra is used by the devotee to invoke the deity and is used by him to worship the deity, and do Japa and Dhyan (repetition, meditation, reflection and contemplation) with.]

दो०. मैं खल मल संकुल मति नीच जाति बस मोह ।

हरि जन द्विज देखें जरउँ करउँ बिष्नु कर द्रोह ॥ १०५ (क) ॥

dōhā.

mair̥m khala mala saṅkula mati nīca jāti basa mōha.

hari jana dvija dēkhēm jara'umṁ kara'umṁ biṣnu kara drōha. 105 (a).

Being of a pervert nature, low of birth and wicked in mind, I used to burn with jealousy at the very sight of devotees of Lord Hari (Vishnu) and learned Brahmins, treating them with utmost disdain and contempt. Not only that, I hated Lord Vishnu himself. (Doha no. 105-a)

सो०. गुर नित मोहि प्रबोध दुखित देखि आचरन मम ।

मोहि उपजइ अति क्रोध दंभिहि नीति कि भावई ॥ १०५ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

gura nita mōhi prabōdha dukhita dēkhi ācarana mama.
mōhi upaja'i ati krōdha dambhihi nīti ki bhāva'ī. 105 (b).

My Guru (my teacher, the Brahmin, who had taught me the Mantra of Lord Shiva and how to worship the Lord) was very sad at my bad behaviour and evil nature. Moved by compassion and love for me, he admonished me everyday, persistently trying his best to help me mend my wicked ways and somehow become more pious in my conduct.

The more he persisted in his effort to improve me, the more resistant I became to his advice and burnt with rage. Say, can a person who is shallow of knowledge and low mentality, one who is a haughty hypocrite¹, ever like hearing good counsel and being told about his failings? (Sortha no. 105-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Sortha.]

चौ०. एक बार गुर लीन्ह बोलाई । मोहि नीति बहु भाँति सिखाई ॥ १ ॥
सिव सेवा कर फल सुत सोई । अबिरल भगति राम पद होई ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

ēka bāra gura līnha bōlā'ī. mōhi nīti bahu bhām'ti sikhā'ī. 1.
siva sēvā kara phala suta sō'ī. abirala bhagati rāma pada hō'ī. 2.

One day my Guru called me and taught me wisdom in every possible way he could think of. (1)

He advised me thus: 'Dear son (suta), the ultimate reward of serving and worshipping Lord Shiva is that a devotee develops steady and deep affection for and faith in the holy feet of Lord Ram (who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu)¹.

[Therefore, you should not harbour ill-will against Lord Vishnu or his devotee the way you are doing at present. I sincerely advise you to change your attitude towards them, because Lord Shiva will surely not approve the way you are behaving. If the Lord gets angry at you, you will have to suffer a lot.] (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 138; (ii) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2; (iii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.]

रामहि भजहिं तात सिव धाता । नर पावँर कै केतिक बाता ॥ ३ ॥
जासु चरन अज सिव अनुरागी । तासु द्रोहँ सुख चहसि अभागी ॥ ४ ॥

rāmahi bhajahim tāta siva dhātā. nara pāvam'ra kai kētika bātā. 3.
jāsu carana aja siva anurāgī. tāsu drōham'sukha cahasi abhāgī. 4.

My dear (tāta)! When both the senior-most Gods of creation, i.e. Lord Shiva (the concluder of creation and the third of the Trinity of Gods) and Lord Brahma (the creator and the senior God of the Trinity), worship Lord Ram and pay their obeisance to him, what do humble and lowly human beings count?¹ (3)

Oh you unfortunate fool of a doomed fate (*abhāgī*)! The Lord (Sri Ram) in whose holy feet Lords Shiva and Brahma have affection—say, how do you ever hope to have your welfare by harbouring enmity and jealousy for the same Lord and his holy feet?’ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 63; (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 124.]

हर कहूँ हरि सेवक गुर कहेऊ । सुनि खगनाथ हृदय मम दहेऊ ॥ ५ ॥
अधम जाति मैं बिद्या पाएँ । भयउँ जथा अहि दूध पिआएँ ॥ ६ ॥

hara kahūṁ hari sēvaka gura kahē'ū. suni khaganātha hṛdaya mama dahē'ū.
5.

adhama jāti maim̐ bidyā pā'ēm̐. bhaya'um̐ jathā ahi dūdha pi'ā'ēm̐. 6.

[Kaagbhusund told Garud—] Oh the Kings of Birds (*khaganātha*)! When I heard that my Guru was saying that Lord Shiva worships and serves Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, and by extension Lord Ram—implying that Lord Ram was senior to Shiva), my heart burnt with indignation. (5)

Being of a low birth and vile in mind, the little knowledge that I had managed to gain (from my Guru about the Mantra of Lord Shiva and how to worship the Lord in a systematic manner) made me puffed-up in false pride and I began hallucinating just like a serpent that becomes all the more poisonous when it is fed with milk¹. (6)

[Note—¹To wit, instead of becoming wise, pious and humble by the acquisition of knowledge and good spiritual advice from my teacher as well as by worshipping Lord Shiva, I became just the opposite. A person would feed a snake with milk as part of his religious views or ritual, thinking that the snake is a representative form of the ‘Seshnath’, the cosmic Serpent on whose coiled back Lord Vishnu rests in the cosmic ocean of milk, and who supports the earth on his thousand hoods. But this snake is so ungrateful that it would have no compunction and regret to bite at the first opportunity even its well-wisher and benefactor, because it does not understand or have any idea about the pious thoughts of the person who is feeding it with milk in the belief that he is offering it as an obeisance to the cosmic Serpent who serves the Supreme Being by acting as the Lord’s resting place, as well as the one who supports the earth, and the life that thrives on it, on its thousand hoods.]

मानी कुटिल कुभाग्य कुजाती । गुर कर द्रोह करउँ दिनु राती ॥ ७ ॥
अति दयाल गुर स्वल्प न क्रोधा । पुनि पुनि मोहि सिखाव सुबोधा ॥ ८ ॥

mānī kuṭila kubhāgya kujātī. gura kara drōha kara'um' dinu rātī. 7.
ati dayāla gura svalpa na krōdhā. puni puni mōhi sikhāva subōdhā. 8.

I was so proud, haughty and arrogant, so wicked and vile by my nature, so unfortunate and dumb-witted, and so lowly of birth that I began to harbour ill-will and hatred for my Guru day and night (inspite of the fact that my Guru was so loving and caring for me, and he always thought of my good and welfare). (7)

Inspite of my arrogance and stubbornness, the Guru was very compassionate, merciful and considerate for he never became angry at me at all; he never showed even a whit of annoyance at me and my rudeness. Instead of getting irritated and angry, he was patient with me, repeatedly trying to inspire me to follow the right and honourable path of prudence, wisdom and piety. (8)

जेहि ते नीच बड़ाई पावा । सो प्रथमहिं हति ताहि नसावा ॥ ९ ॥
धूम अनल संभव सुनु भाई । तेहि बुझाव घन पदवी पाई ॥ १० ॥

jēhi tē nīca barā'ī pāvā. sō prathamahim hati tāhi nasāvā. 9.
dhūma anala sambhava sunu bhā'ī. tēhi bujhāva ghana padavī pā'ī. 10.

It is said that a wicked person would have no compunctions or regrets in betraying a person who had been his benefactor; a vile fellow would be the first person to willingly eliminate or destroy or ruin or dishonour someone who had earlier been instrumental in his rise and acquisition of respect in the world¹. (9)

Listen oh brother (sunu bhā'ī)! The smoke that arises from a fire becomes so haughty when it rises in the sky and acquires the form of a cloud that it extinguishes the fire itself that had produced this smoke!² (10)

[Note—¹A wicked person would not think twice before betraying someone who is his best friend and benefactor. He is so evil-minded and ungrateful that he will have no regret in dishonouring someone who had played a pivotal role in making him successful in life.

²The smoke from a fire rises in the sky and is dark in colour like the rain-bearing cloud. The smoke begins to feel proud of its newly acquired status and resemblance to the cloud. If strong wind does not blow it away, it would suffocate the smouldering fire and extinguish it. This happens because the thick smoke chokes out all oxygen around the fire, and without it the fire slowly dies away.

This analogy is cited to stress the point that a wicked person of a selfish and vile mind would have no hesitation in going against someone who had helped him when he needed support and help in life. He is so ungrateful, unfaithful and thankless that he would forget all his obligations and duties towards his benefactor and well-wisher once his selfish needs are fulfilled.]

रज मग परी निरादर रहई । सब कर पद प्रहार नित सहई ॥ ११ ॥

मरुत उड़ाव प्रथम तेहि भरई । पुनि नृप नयन किरीटन्हि परई ॥ १२ ॥

raja maga parī nirādara raha'ī. saba kara pada prahāra nita saha'ī. 11.
maruta uṛāva prathama tēhi bhara'ī. puni nṛpa nayana kirīṭanhi para'ī. 12.

{Some other instances are given here to show how a lowly, vile and wicked person behaves.}

The dust that lies on the ground is so inconsequential, lowly and humble that it is subjected to constant insult and contempt by one and all, because those who walk on the ground keep kicking and trampled it underfoot. (11)

But when the wind lifts it up, the dust (expands with pride and haughtily) fills the whole of the air around it. Eventually it finds a place to rest on the crown of great kings and fills their eyes¹. (12)

[Note—¹To wit, the dust has no regret in causing discomfort to the king by settling in his eyes though it has already found an exalted place to rest in the crown of the king. The same dust was earlier trampled underfoot, but now it rests on the king's crown, a privilege that is rare to get. Resting on the crown of the king implies that the dust has been given immense honour by the king. So the lowly dust becomes haughty and proud of its newly acquired status, and instead of being thankful to the wind of lifting it from its earlier lowly existence on the ground and elevating it to the high pedestal of a king's crown, and to the king as well for giving it the honour of allowing it to rest on his head which wears the crown, the wicked dust would soon show its true colour by turning hostile towards those who have shown it some favour. It would land in the king's eyes, causing a lot of discomfort to him. The king curses both the wind and the dust, and immediately washes the dust off his eyes as well as the crown.

The people too curse the wind for raising so much dust that their homes get filled with it and needs cleaning once again.

Had the wind not lifted the dust it would not have caused annoyance to one and all; everyone would have welcomed the gust of wind for its cooling and soothing effect on a hot day. Now everyone starts cursing the same wind because it had been moved by pity for the most pitiable condition of the dust that was lying on the ground and kicked by all, and had decided to lift or raise it from the ground so that it is no longer kicked and trampled upon underfoot so mercilessly.

The lowly dust that is treated with contempt by the people as it is kicked and trampled under foot by all constantly forgets its obligations towards either the wind that has lifted it from its condemned life or the king who has allowed it to rest on his crown. It soon irritates the 'king' by falling in his eyes, and it makes the 'wind' get cursed by ordinary people for filling their homes with dirt.]

सुनु खगपति अस समुझि प्रसंगा । बुध नहिं करहिं अधम कर संग्गा ॥ १३ ॥

कबि कोबिद गावहिं असि नीती । खल सन कलह न भल नहिं प्रीती ॥ १४ ॥

sunu khagapati asa samujhi prasaṅgā. budha nahim karahim adhama kara saṅgā. 13.

kabi kōbida gāvahiṁ asi nīṭi. khala sana kalaha na bhala nahiṁ prīṭi. 14.

Oh the King of Birds (khagapati)! Listen. Keeping these things in mind, those who are wise and intelligent do not keep company of wicked, vile and lowly people. (13)

Those who are wise and learned say that it is neither good to have enmity (ill-will and malice) nor develop a friendly (or close) relationship with such people. [To wit, it is wise to keep a safe distance from those who are wicked in heart, are wild and rogue by temperament, and have an evil mind. No one knows when they will stab one behind one's back.] (14)

उदासीन नित रहिअ गोसाईं । खल परिहरिअ स्वान की नाई ॥ १५ ॥
मैं खल हृदयँ कपट कुटिलाई । गुर हित कहइ न मोहि सोहाई ॥ १६ ॥

udāsīna nita rahi'a gōsā'īṁ. khala parihari'a svāna kī nā'īṁ. 15
maiṁ khala hṛdayaṁ kapaṭa kuṭilā'ī. gura hita kaha'i na mōhi sōhā'ī. 16.

Oh Lord (gōsā'īṁ)! One should always be indifferent to and aloof from such people (who are wicked, vile, pervert and lowly). It is better to abandon them from a safe distance like one shoos away a wicked dog. (15)

I was a nasty person of evil nature. My heart was corrupt and filled with wickedness. That is why though my Guru used to tell me those things that were for my own good and welfare, I could not tolerate him or his advice.

[Because of my wicked mind and jealous heart, I thought that my teacher is constantly nagging at me, unnecessarily finding faults in me, does not like my rise as a devotee of Lord Shiva, and is trying to impose his will upon me. So the more he tried to persuade me to improve myself, the more annoyed and stubborn I became.] (16)

दो०. एक बार हर मंदिर जपत रहेउँ सिव नाम ।

गुर आयउ अभिमान तें उठि नहिं कीन्ह प्रनाम ॥ १०६ (क) ॥

dōhā.

ēka bāra hara mandira japata rahē'um' siva nāma.
gura āya'u abhimāna tēm ūṭhi nahiṁ kīnha pranāma. 106 (a).

One day I was doing Japa using Lord Shiva's holy name (i.e. I was meditating upon Lord Shiva by repeating his holy name as a Mantra to concentrate my mind on the Lord).

Just at that time my Guru arrived, but out of my pride and haughtiness I did not get up to bow before him to pay my respects. (Doha no. 106-a)

सो दयाल नहिं कहेउ कछु उर न रोष लवलेस ।

अति अघ गुर अपमानता सहि नहिं सके महेस ॥ १०६ (ख) ॥

sō dayāla nahim kahē'u kachu ura na rōṣa lavalēsa.
ati agha gura apamānatā sahi nahim sakē mahēsa. 106 (b).

He (my Guru) was a very kind-hearted individual, so he did not feel offended or became angry at my irreverent and arrogant behaviour.

But Lord Mahesh (Shiva) could not tolerate this grave sin of showing such great disrespect to the Guru.

[Lord Shiva could not tolerate or condone that someone who calls himself his devotee would be so sinful and pervert as to humiliate his own Guru who had shown him how to worship the Lord in the first place. If Shiva turned a blind eye to this open violation of principles of good behaviour, then the very foundation of Dharma, or proper conduct, would be shaken.] (Doha no. 106-b)

चौ०. मंदिर माझ भई नभ बानी । रे हतभाग्य अग्य अभिमानी ॥ १ ॥

जद्यपि तव गुर कें नहिं क्रोधा । अति कृपाल चित सज़क बोधा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mandira mājha bha'ī nabha bānī. rē hatabhāgya agya abhimānī. 1.
jadyapi tava gura kēm nahim krōdhā. ati krpāla cita samyaka bōdhā. 2.

An ethereal voice was heard from the center of the temple. It strongly admonished and cursed me in the following way: “Oh you evil-natured, ill-fated, proud and haughty fellow of a vile and sinful nature (rē hatabhāgya agya abhimānī). (1)

Though the Guru has no anger in him as he is very merciful and compassionate by his nature and temperament, and possesses true knowledge and wisdom.

[Lord Shiva sternly admonished me while praising my learned Guru when he said: “Listen, your Guru is a saintly person who pays no heed to such things as someone showing honour or dishonour to him. He has equanimity and forgiveness befitting of a truly self-realised person. You are so utterly stupid and lowly that you have not understood his greatness, and other than learning my Mantra and the process of offering worship to me from him, you have learnt nothing else. You are so lowly, uncultured and dumb that you don't even know the basic principles of courteous behaviour—that one should always stand up to show respect when someone senior comes in. So you must be punished.”] (2)

तदपि साप सठ दैहउँ तोही । नीति बिरोध सोहाइ न मोही ॥ ३ ॥

जौं नहिं दंड करौं खल तोरा । भ्रष्ट होइ श्रुतिमारग मोरा ॥ ४ ॥

tadapi sāpa saṭha daiha'um' tōhī. nīti birōdha sōhā'i na mōhī. 3.
jaum nahim daṇḍa karaum khala tōrā. bhraṣṭa hō'i śrutimāraga mōrā. 4.

But oh you wicked and stupid fool (*saṭha*), inspite of that (i.e. though your Guru has forgiven you, but) I shall curse you. I can't tolerate violation of propriety and probity; I can't allow transgression of the principles of righteous behaviour and proper conduct. (3)

Oh you wicked fellow (*khala*)! If I don't punish you, then the sanctity of the holy path that leads to me (Lord Shiva) as espoused by the Vedas would be undermined and violated. (4)

[Lord Shiva said—“Though your Guru has forgiven you for your irreverent and arrogant behaviour because he is a saintly person of a merciful and forgiving nature, but I won't allow this to happen. The Vedas have laid down certain strict and basic norms of behaviour that one should follow in order to attain Lord God, one of whose forms is Lord Shiva. If one is allowed to take liberty with this path then the whole edifice of Dharma would crumble. To show respect to one's Guru or teacher is one of the basic principles of good behaviour and good manners even if one does not cite any scripture to stress its importance. And you are such a foolish person that you don't have the basic sense of showing courtesy to your teacher. Such disciples should be sternly dealt with, for if I tolerate you then the holy path that leads one to me would be tarnished with the taint of not only wildness and indiscipline but also of showing irreverence towards those who are pious and saintly and devoted to me like your Guru is. This is not allowed at all. Therefore, I must punish you.”]

जे सठ गुर सन इरिषा करहीं । रौरव नरक कोटि जुग परहीं ॥ ५ ॥
त्रिजग जोनि पुनि धरहिं सरीरा । अयुत जन्म भरि पावहिं पीरा ॥ ६ ॥

jē saṭha gura sana iriṣā karahīm. raurava naraka kōṭi juga parahīm. 5.
trijaga jōni puni dharahīm sarīrā. ayuta janma bhari pāvahīm pīrā. 6.

[And what should be your punishment? It is this—] A person who is stupid enough to harbour ill-will and malice towards his Guru is condemned to a horrible hell known as 'Raurav' for countless Yugs (i.e. for numerous eras, or a very long period of time). (5)

When they get out of this great hell, they take a lowly birth as a 'Trijag' ("trijaga"; i.e. in a sub-human species such land-bound animals or as air-bound birds), and continue to suffer huge torments for ten thousand successive births (i.e. they suffer continuously for countless births, without any respite). (6)

बैठ रहेसि अजगर इव पापी । सर्प होहि खल मल मति व्यापी ॥ ७ ॥
महा बिटप कोटर महुँ जाई । रहु अधमाधम अधगति पाई ॥ ८ ॥

baiṭha rahēsi ajagara iva pāpī. sarpa hōhi khala mala mati byāpī. 7.
mahā biṭapa kōṭara mahum̐ jāī. rahu adhamādhama adhagati pāī. 8.

Oh you sinful one (*pāpī*)! Since you wished to keep sitting on the ground when your Guru arrived, so be it; keep sitting where you are like a python in front of your Guru!

Oh you wicked fellow (khala) of low wisdom and degraded mind (mala mati byāpī)!
Be condemned to become a serpent¹! (7)

Oh you vilest of vile fellows (adhamādhama)! Go slither away and live hidden
inside a dark hollow of a huge tree somewhere.” (8)

[Note—¹Just like a python that is so lazy that it keeps lying on its belly without moving even for food, you too shall turn into a loathsome serpent who is abhorred by all. You were too lazy to get up and show respect to your Guru, you acted as if you don't have legs to lift you from your sitting posture. You prefer to keep sitting on the ground, so let it be so—become a serpent and be grounded for life. You need not stand up again any more, because you will be a serpent. That is what you prefer—to keep sitting on the ground. So be it.]

दो०. हाहाकार कीन्ह गुर दारुन सुनि सिव साप।

कंपित मोहि बिलोकि अति उर उपजा परिताप ॥ १०७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

hāhākāra kīnha gura dārūna suni siva sāpa.
kampita mōhi bilōki ati ura upajā paritāpa. 107 (a).

The Guru was aghast and he raised a cry of pity when he heard the terrible curse of Lord Shiva. When he saw me shivering with fear and extremely terrified, he felt immensely sorry and agonised in his heart for me and my doomed fate. (Doha no. 107-a)

करि दंडवत सप्रेम द्विज सिव सन्मुख कर जोरि।

बिनय करत गदगद स्वर समुझि घोर गति मोरि ॥ १०७ (ख) ॥

kari daṇḍavata saprēma dvija siva sanmukha kara jōri.
binaya karata gadagada svara samujhi ghōra gati mōri. 107 (b).

When the Brahmin thought of my horrifying destiny because of the curse of the Lord, he was so moved with pity that he prostrated before Lord Shiva, joined his palms as a gesture of respect, and prayed to him with a voice choked with emotions. (Doha no. 107-b)

{What follows herein below is an excellent prayer dedicated to Lord Shiva. The choice of words and their use for the purpose of construction of complex phrases that are expertly structured in such a fine manner that all grammatical parameters of a perfect verse are adhered to is really a literary jewel in its own right. The supremacy, divinity, holiness and glories of Lord Shiva have been brought to the fore in this prayer.}

छं०. नमामीशमीशान निर्वाणरूपं । विभुं व्यापकं ब्रह्म वेदस्वरूपं ॥ १ ॥

chanda.

namāmiśamīśāna nirvāṇarūpaṁ. vibhuṁ vyāpakaṁ brahma vēdasvarūpaṁ. 1.

‘Oh Isha (Lord of the world)! I reverentially bow before you. You are the cardinal deity of creation and the patron god of the Ishan direction (north-east). You are an image of Nirvaan (final liberation and deliverance; i.e. you exemplify the state of being attained by a creature when he is delivered from the fetters of this world and its attendant delusions).

You are Vibhu (the Supreme Being who is almighty, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, magnanimous, eternal, infinite, all-powerful, immovable, constant and immutable). You are Vyaapak (one who is immanent, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing). You are a personified form of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Being, as well as the Vedas (the embodiment of Gyan-knowledge, wisdom, gnosis and enlightenment). (1)

निजं निर्गुणं निर्विकल्पं निरीहं । चिदाकाशमाकाशवासं भजेऽहं ॥ २ ॥

nijaṁ nirguṇaṁ nirvikalpaṁ nirīhaṁ. cidākāśamākāśavāsaṁ bhajē'haṁ. 2.

You have realised your true ‘self’ and are therefore firmly established in it. [This ‘true self’ is the pure conscious Atma, the soul.]

Hence, you possess all the virtues of the Atma—such as being Nirguna (without any Gunas or qualifications or qualities; without any taints associated with the different aspects of creation, such as the good, the bad, the mediocre, and everything in between).

You are Nirvikalp (one of your own kind; without any alternatives or parallel or comparison; without any sort of divisions; uniform and seamless).

You are Niriha (without any desires, passions, yearnings or wants; to be totally dispassionate and non-desirous of anything; to be complete detached from anything and everything).

You live in a sublime and ethereal form as the Consciousness that pervades the subtle aspect sky in this creation (such as the one that fills all the space in the heart of the living beings). Not only this, you are present throughout the visible form of this sky that fills this world. And you wear the sky (firmament) as your cloth; you are surrounded by the subtle sky from all sides.

[This is an important observation: Lord Shiva represents the enlightened creature who has realised the true nature of his ‘self’ as the Atma, the pure consciousness. This Atma is a miniscule or microcosmic form of the Parmatma, the cosmic Atma. This Atma lives in the subtle space—the sky—of the gross organ known as the heart present in all persons. Just as no one can live without the heart, there can be no life without the Atma. This Atma is not a gross entity like the physical heart or the body in which it lives; it is rather an ethereal entity that is similar to the air that fills the entire length and breadth of the sky. Like the Atma that cannot be physically seen but its existence nevertheless cannot be doubted, Lord Shiva is the

cosmic Consciousness that is present everywhere in this creation, filling every nook and corner of the sky, though one cannot actually see the Lord with his physical organ of the eye.]

I have devotion for you; I worship you; I adore and admire you ('Bhaje-ham'). (2)

निराकारमोँकारमूलं तुरीयं । गिरा ग्यान गोतीतमीशं गिरीशं ॥ ३ ॥

nirākāramōṅkāramūlaṁ turīyaṁ. girā gyāna gōtītamīśaṁ girīśaṁ. 3.

You are Nirakar (without any forms and attributes).

You are the root from which the ethereal sound of OM generates; you are a personified form of OM, the ethereal word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm and the cosmic Consciousness. [Or, you represent the primary Consciousness which generated the primordial 'sound' represented by the word OM that pervades the entire sky. It is from the energy of this sound that the rest of the creation has come into being. This subtle sound of OM pervades throughout the firmament of creation. It ought to be noted here that the 'sound', and the 'alphabets' of any language that represent the various notes of this sound, do not have any form—i.e. they are 'Nirakar'. Language is used to express an idea; OM expresses the idea known as Consciousness. Words and sound stand for life because dead entities don't speak or make any sound. Therefore, Lord Shiva is a personified form of all forms of life in this creation—both the animate as well as the inanimate. He is the supreme transcendental Consciousness from which the rest of the creation evolved.]

You exist in the Turiya (transcendental) state of consciousness. [The 'consciousness' has four states—(i) The waking state or Jagrat when the gross organs of the creature's body are active; (ii) The dreaming state or Swapna when his gross organs are inactive but the subtle mind and sub-conscious are active; (iii) the deep sleep state or Sushupta when even the mind becomes inactive, and the (v) Turiya state which is beyond the third state—hence is called the transcendental state of existence. This eclectic state is achieved by ascetics and self-realised persons only.]

You are beyond the reach (understanding and grasp) of Vaani (the faculty of speech; i.e. it is not possible to describe you or teach about you), Gyan (gnosis; knowledge based on reasoning and analytical thinking), and Indris (the sense organs of the body). [That is, no one can comprehensively understand you. The best way is to experience your presence in the form of the bliss obtained when one is blessed by the Holy Spirit you represent.]

You are the Lord of the mountains. [This is because Lord Shiva is supposed to live on high hills or mountains, submerged in deep meditation and contemplation, far away from the tumult of the mundane world and its accompanying horrors and delusions. His terrestrial abode is Mt. Kailash in the upper reaches of the northern Himalayan mountain ranges.] (3)

करालं महाकाल कालं कृपालं । गुणागार संसारपारं नतोऽहं ॥ ४ ॥

karālaṁ mahākāla kālaṁ kṛpālaṁ. guṇāgāra sansārapāraṁ natō'haṁ. 4.

Your form is ferocious and formidable. [This refers to his role as Rudra, the angry form as the concluder or annihilator of creation. He is fierce when he assumes this role—unrelenting, unforgiving and uncompromising. When sins, evil, demeanours and perversions reach a crescendo in creation, Lord Shiva becomes very angry. Despite all his efforts to spread wisdom and enlightenment, the creatures won't pay heed to him. So, like an annoyed king, this cosmic Emperor wishes to punish his mischievous subjects so that the pious and holy souls can live in peace. It is then that he becomes fierce. Otherwise, he is always calm and serenity personified; he is always depicted in the scriptures as well as iconography as a deity with close eyes sitting in meditative trance.]

Indeed, you are the Maha-kaal, the great God of Death personified. You are the death of even the God of Death. [All the Gods have a limited life-span. 'Death' is the most powerful force of creation. Birth is uncertain, but death is certain. 'Death' does not spare even the Gods who are supposed to be immortal. The 'Maha-kaal' form of Shiva refers to the supreme Brahm who exists even after the entire creation has been wiped out. 'Death' or 'Kaal' devours all living beings; Lord Shiva devours 'Kaal' itself. This is another way of saying that there is no one to devour or kill Shiva. Or, in other words, Shiva is eternal and without the fear of death. There is no God superior to him!]

You are Kripaāl (merciful, compassionate, gracious, kind).

You are Gunaagaar (an abode of all virtuous qualities). ['Guna' = qualities and auspicious virtues; 'Aagaar' = abode.]

You transcend this world ('Sansaar-paaram'). [That is, you have a transcendental existence; you are eternally free from the bondage of birth and death; you are free from all the taints and delusions associated with this world.]

I reverentially bow my head before you ('Natoham'). (4)

तुषाराद्रि संकाश गौरं गभीरं । मनोभूत कोटि प्रभा श्री शरीरं ॥ ५ ॥

tuṣārādri saṅkāśa gauram gabhīram. manōbhūta kōṭi prabhā śrī śarīram. 5.

You are like the snow-covered mountains—fair in complexion, and extremely calm, quiet and serene as well as serious and sober. [The snow-covered mountains are white in colour. The body of Shiva is smeared with the ash of the fire sacrifice, giving it the appearance of fairness. The deep recesses of the lofty mountains are calm and serene, so is Lord Shiva. No worldly sounds of the plains reach these mountains; they are free from all pollutions, congestions, the hustle and bustle and the turmoil of mundane life that are the hallmarks of the plains. Likewise, Lord Shiva is too calm and tranquility personified.]

Your divine form is as beauteous, radiant and charming as millions of Kaamdeos (the God of love, cupid and charms). (5)

स्फुरन्मौलि कल्लेलिनी चारु गंगा । लसद्भालबालेन्दु कंठे भुजंगा ॥ ६ ॥

sphuranmauli kallōlinī cāru gaṅgā. lasadbhālabālēndu kaṇṭhē bhujaṅgā. 6.

You carry the nectar-like and pristine water of the holy river Ganges on your head, locked in the thick matted hairs¹.

Your forehead is adorned by the crescent moon², and serpents are wrapped around your neck³. (6)

[Note—¹The imagery and symbolism are absolutely fabulous. The Ganges emerges from a glacier in the Himalayas, and then its streams swirl, foam, toss and turn as they meander their way down the curves of the mountain and its gorges and valleys. The thick lock of hairs on Shiva's head symbolizes these turns and curves, the gorges and valleys of the Himalayas. The when Ganges descended upon earth, the Gods feared that its thunderous descent with its thunderbolt like strike will split or crack the earth into two. So they prayed Lord Shiva to accept the holy river on his head. The Lord willingly accepted it, because he knew, being the most enlightened God, that this river has its origin from the toe-nails of Lord Vishnu, one of the other forms of the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing Lord God. So this was a rare opportunity—to taste the nectar and the ambrosia of eternity and bliss emanating directly from Lord Vishnu's holy feet.

²Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a crescent moon on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called 'one Pada' or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The moon present on Shiva's forehead also stands for the various eclectic qualities called Kalaas that he possesses and which adorn him like the moon. Symbolically, the devotee is advised to follow the example of his chosen deity Lord Shiva and note the symbolism of the Moon on his head. These eclectic qualities should be as prominent as the moon on the head of Shiva and they should form an integral part of the character of the devotee if he wishes to place himself in the position of being called a sincere follower and worshipper of Lord Shiva. Now let us have a glimpse of these Kalaas. They are the various eclectic qualities or attributes that an exalted man should possess, and briefly they are the following—(i) Shraddha (faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self)

(xiii) Mantra (the ability to give good advise, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

Reference should be made to the Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition in this context.

³The significance of the serpents wrapped around his body—The coiled serpents around his body indicate the fact that he constantly reminds himself of imminent death because serpents are very poisonous and symbolise immediate death. This helps him to remain focused on his spiritual aim of self-realisation instead of being attracted by the material charms of this material world of sense objects and getting deluded by them. The serpents also signify that Shiva is the Lord of death; he is death personified. Since he is able to wrap the serpents around his body and they cannot harm him, it indicates the fact that he has conquered death. That is why he is called ‘Mrityunjay’, the conqueror of death.

Again, the coiled serpents represent the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine which when activated can entitle the spiritual aspirant to experience a burst of stupendous spiritual energy which provides him a glimpse of his own divine powers as well as the powers of the cosmic Consciousness present inside his bosom as his Atma. This Kundalini is activated by doing numerous Yoga exercises as described in the Upanishads on the subject of Yoga.

The coiled serpents may also represent cycles of time in the macrocosm and the basic energy of life in the microcosm in the form of reproductive and procreative energy.

These reptiles are very ferocious, dangerous, poisonous, and a symbol of male potency. The symbolism is that Shiva is a very potent God who can be extremely ruthless and unforgiving towards sinful creatures. He has exercised extreme self control and has ‘girdled’ or readied himself in preparation for enduring the greatest of hardships and sufferance for self-realisation as well as to provide the world with liberation and deliverance. The serpents warn his enemies not to fool around with him. That is also why he has fire in one of his hands. This fire signifies his ability to reduce to ashes the entire physical world consisting of falsehood and sins as well as eliminate all impurities, imperfections, faults and shortcomings that cripple the creature’s spiritual well being.

The Dakshin Murti Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 8, 10, 13, 15 and 19 affirms that Shiva is invariably wrapped by serpents.]

चलत्कुण्डलं भ्रू सुनेत्रं विशालं । प्रसन्नाननं नीलकण्ठं दयालं ॥ ७ ॥

calatkuṇḍalaṁ bhrū sunētraṁ viśālaṁ. prasannānanaṁ nīlakaṇṭhaṁ dayālaṁ.
7.

Large ear-rings dangle and sway majestically from your ears. Your eyes are broad and the eye-brows are magnificent to look at. You are cheerful, have a blue-tinged throat¹, and are most merciful and gracious. (7)

[Note—¹He is known as Neelkanth because he had drunk the horrible poison called Halaahal which emerged as a scorching froth at the time of churning of the ocean by

the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit or the ambrosia of life and eternity. The legend goes that Lord Shiva had drunk the fierce poison that emerged at the time of churning of the celestial ocean in the beginning of creation by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. As soon as this boiling poison came out, there was the fear of the entire creation being scalded by its heat and ferocity. So Lord Shiva took the name of Lord Ram and gulped it in one mouthful. But the Lord knew that if this poison entered his abdomen the whole creation will be annihilated nevertheless as it resided in his abdomen. This shows that Lord Shiva is none but the supreme Brahm in whose body the entire creation resides like the embryo lives in its mother's womb. Hence, the merciful Lord kept the poison in his throat, giving it a purple colour.

Refer: (i) Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 11, 16. (ii) Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Canto 18. In its verse no. 18 it is stated that—(a) Lord Shiva had drunk the poison while invoking and repeating the holy Mantra, and of course that Mantra was the holy name of Lord Ram because the Lord is Shiva's patron deity, and (b) this is the reason why his throat became dark blue or purple, because he had retained the poison in his throat instead of gulping it down in his stomach. (iii) The same fact is endorsed in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19. (iv) Tulsidas' Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 157-158 allude to Lord Shiva drinking the Halaahal poison.]

मृगाधीशचर्मार्ज्वरं मुण्डमालं । प्रियं शंकरं सर्वनाथं भजामि ॥ ८ ॥

mrgādhīśacarmāmbaram muṇḍamālāṁ. priyaṁ śaṅkaraṁ sarvanātham bhajāmi. 8.

You are wrapped in the hide of a lion, the king of animals. ['Mrig' = wild animals of the forest; 'Dhish' = king.]

You wear a necklace of skulls. [This symbolizes the fact that Lord Shiva is always aware of death and keeps this garland around his neck to constantly remind him of the futility of worldly life.]

You are the Lord of all in this world; you are dear to them. Oh Lord Shankar—I worship you, adore you, am devoted to you, and always remember you ('Bhajaami'). (8)

प्रचंडं प्रकृष्टं प्रगल्भं परेशं । अखंडं अजं भानुकोटिप्रकाशं ॥ ९ ॥

pracaṇḍam prakṛṣṭam pragalbham parēśam. akhaṇḍam ajam bhānukōṭiprakāśam. 9.

You assume a fierce and formidable form ('Prachand'—in your form as Lord Rudra).

You are the supreme, the most exalted and the best God in creation ('Prakrishtha').

You are splendidous and radiant ('Pragalambha').

You are the Supreme Being known as Parmeshwar ('Paresham').

You are Akhand (immutable, indivisible, whole, steady, constant and uniform).

You are Aja (i.e. you have no birth or beginning; you are eternal and infinite). [Refer to verse no. 3 that says Lord Shiva is the personified form of OM.]

You are splendid and radiant as millions of suns put together. ['Bhanu' = sun; 'Koti' = million; 'Prakash' = illumination, light. This epithet for Lord Shiva assumes significance because he is deemed to be the most enlightened amongst the Gods. The 'illumination, light, splendour and radiance that is equivalent to the sun' is a metaphoric way of saying that the level of gnosis and enlightenment that Shiva has achieved is unmatched in this creation as the light of the sun which too is unrivalled in this world.] (9)

त्रयःशूल निर्मूलनं शूलपाणिं । भजेऽहं भवानीपतिं भावगञ्जं ॥ १० ॥

trayaḥśūla nirmūlanam śūlapāṇim. bhajē'ham bhavānīpatiṁ bhāvagamyam.
10.

You can neutralize all the three types of horrors ('Traya-Shul') that torment the creature in this world. [These three horrors are the following—(i) Adhidaivic= torments caused by malignant stars; (ii) Adhibhautic = torments caused by worldly entities such as enemies and opponents; and (iii) Adhyatmic = torments caused on the spiritual front.]

You hold a trident ('Trishul') in your hands. [This 'trident' stands for these three horrors, and the ability of the Lord to neutralize them.

I pay my obeisance, worship and adore ('Bhaje') the Lord of Bhavaani ('Bhavaani' = Goddess Uma or Parvati, the Mother Goddess; 'Pati' = husband; Lord) with due faith, devotion and dedication ('Bhaava'). (10)

कलातीत कल्याण कल्पान्तकारी । सदा सज्जनानन्ददाता पुरारी ॥ ११ ॥

kalātīta kalyāṇa kalpāntakārī. sadā sajjanānandadātā purārī. 11.

You are beyond measurements and comparisons with any of the Kalaas¹ of creation.

You are the one who provides all auspiciousness and welfare ('Kalyaan') to the world, and are also the Lord who brings to an end the era of creation known as the Kalpa ('Kalpaanta-kaari'). [That is, on the one hand you take care of the welfare of the world, and on the other hand you end it also.]

You always give happiness ('Anand') to those who are gentle, simple, polite and honourable ('Sajjan'). [That is, those who are gentlemanly should have no cause of fear from you as the fierce God of Death who brings about the end of this world. It is only the wicked who need to harbour such fear.]

You are known as 'Purari'—the Lord who has vanquished and slayed the demon known as Tripuraa. [Or, it also might mean that 'you are the Lord who lives in the inner-self of the creature as his Atma. The word 'Pur' means an abode, and 'Purari' therefore means one who lives in this abode. According to the Upanishads, the supreme Brahm resides in the subtle heart of the creature as his Atma; Brahm lives inside the gross body of the creature as his pure consciousness. This alludes to the fact that Lord Shiva is none else but the supreme transcendental Brahm himself.] (11)

[Note—¹Kalaa: See note of stanza no. 6 herein above.

They are also called the sixteen *Aakarshini Shaktis* of creation that makes the possessor of these virtues much sought after in society. The word 'Aakarshini' means one that attracts others, and the word 'Shakti' of course means power. These are the following—(i) the power possessed by Pran, the vital life-sustaining winds or airs which maintain the vibrations, the rhythm and the essential functions of life in this creation; (ii) the power that comes with having Shraddha, i.e. having the eclectic virtues of faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect and devotion that one has for his chosen deity, for the Supreme Being, and for the aim of life one has set for himself; (iii) the power to be as vast, all-pervading and all-encompassing as the Sky element known as 'Akash'; (iv) the power that is equivalent to that possessed by the Wind or Air element known as 'Vayu' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of air; (v) the power that is known as 'Tej', literally meaning vigour, vitality, energy, dynamism etc. that are depicted by the Fire element known as 'Agni' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of heat and warmth; (vi) the powers equivalent to those possessed by the Water element known as 'Apaha' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of water; (vii) the powers that are equivalent to the earth element known as 'Prithivi' which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation, the power that helps one to sustain others and therefore it makes a person much sought after; (viii) the powers displayed by the various sense organs of the body, called the 'Indriya', because it is these organs that enable the creature to achieve stupendous and most astounding tasks that are even beyond imagination; (ix) the immense and most lauded power of the mind and sub-conscious known as the 'Mana' which has formidable potentials and reach, keeping the creature firmly held in its grip, and without which power nothing can be done or any success achieved in any field whatsoever; (x) the power equivalent to that possessed by food or 'Anna' which is absolutely essential for survival and has such powerful force of attraction that people go long distances in search of food, even kill each other over it; (xi) the magnificent power to create and generate that is shown by the semen known as the 'Virya' which stands for courage, valour, potency, vitality and strength, vigour, dynamism etc., and anyone who possesses these glorious powers or virtues is surely much attractive and useful for others; (xii) the power that comes with doing 'Tapa', meaning austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance, carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self, sufferance for some auspicious and noble cause, etc., virtues that make the person who possesses them have a magnetic appeal for others; (xiii) the powers inherent in the various mystical 'Mantras' which are great spiritual formulas with astounding potentials to fulfill all desires of the user; they are like keys to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advice; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion; the mystical powers that are an integral part of the Mantra and represent the various dynamic forces of Nature which could be invoked and harnessed by the creature and help him to utilise the latent cosmic energy, the strength, the dynamism and other magnificent powers incorporated in these Mantras for the benefit of creation at large; (xiv) the power to do various deeds and take actions, the strength, energy and stamina to perform even difficult tasks, the powers that are an integral part of the theory of doing Karma; (xv) the powers that makes a man so powerful that he can have control over the various worlds called the three Lokas, i.e. the mortal world

where the creatures live on earth, the lower heaven called the Antariksha where the junior Gods and the Spirits of dead ancestors live, and the upper heaven or Brahm Loka where the senior Gods live; it also refers to the terrestrial world, the heavens and the nether world, as well as the different worlds as experienced during the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep states of existence of the consciousness; and finally (xvi) the inherent power in one's good name, the power of 'Naam'; this gives the person fame, acclaim, authority and respect in society; it bestows reputation, honour and glory that a person so much seeks in this world. This power of good name and its value in terms of making the man famous and eternal in the memory of others is so attractive that everyone wishes to gain some good name for himself in this world. A person with good name attracts others towards himself.]

चिदानंदसंदोह मोहापहारी । प्रसीद प्रसीद प्रभो मन्मथारी ॥ १२ ॥

cidānandasandōha mōhāpahārī. prasīda prasīda prabhō manmathārī. 12.

You are eternally in a state of blessedness and blissfulness ('Chidanand').

You remove doubts, perplexities, confusions, vexations and delusions of all kinds. ['Haari' = to dispel, remove; 'Sandoha; Moha' = doubts and delusions.]

Oh Lord ('Prabho') who had conquered the invincible enemy symbolized by passions and desires that churn the mind and the heart, creating a state of flux, causing restlessness, anxiety, loss of peace and happiness ('Manmathaari'). Please be gracious upon me; be pleased with me. (12)

न यावद् उमानाथ पादारविन्दं । भजंतीह लोके परे वा नराणां ॥ १३ ॥

न तावत्सुखं शान्ति सन्तापनाशं । प्रसीद प्रभो सर्वभूताधिवासं ॥ १४ ॥

na yāvad umānātha pādāravindam. bhajantīha lōkē parē vā narāṇām. 13.

na tāvatsukham śānti santāpanāśam. prasīda prabhō sarvabhūtādhivāsam. 14.

As long as a person does not worship and have devotion for the holy feet of the Lord of Uma (i.e. Lord Shiva) he cannot ever expect to have any sort of peace and comfort either in this world (current life) or in the world hereinafter (the next world after death; the next life), and neither is it possible for them to find freedom from the agony, horrors and distress caused by the three Taaps (torments). [These three types of torments are listed in verse no. 10.]

Oh Lord who resides in the heart of all living beings (as their Atma, their soul)¹! Kindly be pleased with me, be gracious upon me. (13-14)

[Note—¹The very fact that the worshipper addresses Lord Shiva as the one who lives in the heart or the inner being of all creatures underlines the high level of his erudition and sagacity. The worshipper is paying his obeisance to the supreme transcendental Brahm when he offers his prayers to Lord Shiva.

Non-duality between Brahm, Atma and Shiva is affirmed in the Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3, stanza no. 1-2. The non-duality or oneness between Brahm and Shiva has been expounded in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Varaaha Upanishad, Canto

4, verse no. 32; Dakshin Murti or Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad. (ii) Atharva Veda's Atharva-shir Upanishad.

The Bhasma Jabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition was preached by Lord Shiva himself to sage Jabal Bhusund, and it highlights the fact that Lord Shiva is no ordinary God, or even a senior one being a member of the Trinity of Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder, but is the supreme transcendental Brahm himself personified. Shiva is the Supreme Being himself. Refer Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph no. 3, 6-8.]

न जानामि योगं जपं नैव पूजां । नतोऽहं सदा सर्वदा शंभु तुज्यं ॥ १५ ॥

na jānāmi yōgam japam naiva pūjām. natō'ham sadā sarvadā śambhu tubhyam. 15.

I do not know how to do Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of the holy name of the Lord and his Mantras), or Puja (worship). Oh Lord Shambhu¹ (Shiva)! I only know one thing—and it is to always bow before you. [That is, I am not an expert in any of the methods prescribed by the scriptures for one's spiritual welfare and for honouring the Supreme Being. I am not literate and wise enough to know them. I am a humble being, so the only thing I can do and know about is to bow most reverentially before you, unpretentiously and sincerely.] (15)

[Note—¹Shambhu—Lord Shiva is known as Shambhu as he is the one who remains uniform, unruffled and calm even under adverse situations. Shambhu is one who exists or is established in an enlightened state of highest consciousness (i.e. is 'Bhu') that is marked by perfect self control, complete neutrality, absolute tranquility, serenity, peacefulness and blissfulness (i.e. is 'Sham'). Refer Atharvashikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Kandika 3.]

जरा जन्म दुःखौघ तातप्यमानं । प्रभो पाहि आपन्नमामीश शंभो ॥ १६ ॥

jarā janma duḥkhaugha tātapyamānam. prabhō pāhi āpannamāmīśa śambhō. 16.

Oh Lord Shambhu! Please save me from the horrifying agonies that accompany old age (death) and birth (i.e. from the endless cycle of birth and death). [In other words, be merciful to grant me Mukti or liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration. Please ensure my emancipation and salvation inspite of the fact that I do not know how to offer formal forms of worship to you—see verse no. 15.]

Oh Lord God ('Prabho; Isha')! I come to seek shelter with you; please accept me.' (16)

श्लोक. रुद्राष्टकमिदं प्रोक्तं विप्रेण हरतोषये । १७ ॥

ये पठन्ति नरा भक्त्या तेषां शङ्भुः प्रसीदति ॥ १८ ॥

ślōka.

rudrāṣṭakamidaṁ prōktaṁ viprēṇa haratōṣayē. 17
yē paṭhanti narā bhaktayā tēṣāṁ śambhuḥ prasīdati. 18.

Shloka—This hymn known as ‘Rudra Ashtak’¹ was pronounced by the Vipra (Brahmin) in honour of Lord Har (Shiva). Those people who read it or use it to offer their obeisance to Lord Shiva, please the Lord; Lord Shiva is gracious upon them and pleased with them. (Sholka nos. 17-18). [This hymn precedes Doha no. 108 of Uttar Kand, Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas.]

[Note—¹The word ‘Ashtak’ means ‘eight’. This hymn is called ‘Ashtak’ because it contains eight verses of two lines each, totaling sixteen lines in all.]

दो०. सुनि बिनती सर्बग्य सिव देखि बिप्र अनुरागु ।
पुनि मंदिर नभबानी भइ द्विजबर बर मागु ॥ १०८ (क) ॥
dōhā.

sunī binatī sarbagya siva dēkhi bipra anurāgu.
puni mandira nabhabānī bha'i dvijabara bara māgu. 108 (a).

When the all-knowing Lord Shiva heard the prayer (for mercy) and observed the sincerity and affection of the Brahmin, he was moved. So, once again an ethereal voice that was speaking from the sky was heard inside the temple. It said: “Oh exalted Brahmin (dvijabara)! Ask for a boon (as I am pleased with you).” (Doha no. 108-a)

जौं प्रसन्न प्रभु मो पर नाथ दीन पर नेहु ।
निज पद भगति देइ प्रभु पुनि दूसर बर देहु ॥ १०८ (ख) ॥

jaum prasanna prabhu mō para nātha dīna para nēhu.
nija pada bhagati dē'i prabhu puni dūsara bara dēhu. 108 (b).

The Brahmin replied, “Oh Lord, if you are indeed pleased with me and have affection for this humble person, then first and foremost please grant me the boon of having devotion for your holy feet. After that you can give me anything else which you would be pleased to give me¹. (Doha no. 108-b)

[Note—¹The learned Brahmin did not wish to lose this golden opportunity. So he asked for devotion first. There are other instances also where the devotee asks the Lord for grant of the boon of devotion if the Lord really is pleased with him and wishes to give him something.

For example, when the crow-saint Kaagbhusund was asked by Lord Ram to seek a boon. Kaagbhusund also told the Lord that if he is indeed pleased with him then the only thing that he wants is to have the greatest of affection and devotion for

the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 84 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

तव माया बस जीव जड़ संतत फिरड़ भुलान ।

तेहि पर क्रोध न करिअ प्रभु कृपा सिंधु भगवान ॥१०८ (ग)॥

tava māyā basa jīva jaṛa santata phira'i bhulāna.

tēhi para krōdha na kari'a prabhu kṛpā sindhu bhagavāna.108 (c).

Influenced by the power of your Maya (delusions), the stupid and gross-minded creature wonders here and there like someone who is disoriented, committing small or big errors unwittingly (as he is deluded and is not even aware that he is doing something wrong).

Oh Lord God who is like an ocean of mercy and compassion (kṛpā sindhu bhagavāna)! Please don't be angry at him (i.e. on my disciple who had not shown respect to me by standing up and bowing before me when I came in, a stupid act of his that has made you curse him so terribly).

[To wit, oh Lord, he is an ordinary and ignorant person, and a utterly stupid person at that, for he who does not know what is right and what is not. He is not someone wise and enlightened from whom one expects good conduct. So please excuse him for his mistake.] (Doha no. 108-c)

संकर दीनदयाल अब एहि पर होहु कृपाल ।

साप अनुग्रह होइ जेहि नाथ थोरेहीं काल ॥ १०८ (घ)॥

saṅkara dīnadayāla aba ēhi para hōhu kṛpāla.

sāpa anugraha hō'i jēhim nātha thōrēhīm kāla. 108 (d).

Oh Lord Shiva who shows mercy on the meek and the humble (saṅkara dīnadayāla)! Now please be gracious enough to show kindness on him so that the curse becomes milder and of a shorter duration, and he is soon he freed from its horrible effects. (Doha no. 108-d)

चौ०. एहि कर होइ परम कल्याना । सोइ करहु अब कृपानिधाना ॥ १ ॥

बिप्रगिरा सुनि परहित सानी । एवमस्तु इति भइ नभबानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi kara hō'i parama kalyānā. sō'i karahu aba kṛpānidhānā. 1.

bipragirā suni parahita sānī. ēvamastu iti bha'i nabhabānī. 2.

Now please, oh Lord (Shiva) who is an abode of mercy and compassion (kṛpānidhānā), do something that may help ensure his welfare, help him tide over the terrible consequences of your curse and ultimately achieve the stature of supreme blessedness.” (1)

When the Lord heard the plea of the learned Brahmin, a selfless prayer meant for the welfare of an unfortunate person, he was moved and pleased so much so that he spoke again in the form of a heavenly voice, saying, “It shall be so (i.e. your wish for the spiritual welfare of your disciple is hereby granted). (2)

जदपि कीन्ह एहिं दारुन पापा । मैं पुनि दीन्हि कोप करि सापा ॥ ३ ॥
तदपि तुम्हारि साधुता देखी । करिहउँ एहि पर कृपा बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥

jadapi kīnha ēhiṁ dārūna pāpā. maiṁ puni dīnhi kōpa kari sāpā. 3.
tadapi tumhāri sādhitā dēkhī. kariha'um' ēhi para kṛpā bisēṣī. 4.

Though he has committed a grave sin which normally shouldn't be forgiven, and therefore he had invited my wrath. I had become so annoyed with him that I had cursed him in disgust (3).

But observing your piety and saintly nature (that thinks for the welfare of others who are lowly and unfortunate by fate), I shall make an exception for him and bless him in a special way; I shall extend a special favour to him (4).

छमासील जे पर उपकारी । ते द्विज मोहि प्रिय जथा खरारी ॥ ५ ॥
मोर श्राप द्विज व्यर्थ न जाइहि । जन्म सहस अवस्य यह पाइहि ॥ ६ ॥

chamāsīla jē para upakārī. tē dvija mōhi priya jathā kharārī. 5.
mōra śrāpa dvija byārtha na jā'ihī. janma sahasa avasya yaha pā'ihī. 6.

A exalted Brahmin who has the noble qualities of forgiveness and beneficence is as dear to me as the Lord who holds a bow and arrow in his hands (i.e. Lord Ram—“kharārī”) who is also very dear to my heart. (5)

Oh noble Brahmin! My curse cannot go in vain, and it will be effective inasmuch as he will surely have to take countless births in accordance to that curse. (6)

जनमत मरत दुसह दुख होई । एहि स्वल्पउ नहिं व्यापिहि सोई ॥ ७ ॥
कवनेउँ जन्म मिटिहि नहिं ग्याना । सुनहि सूद्र मम बचन प्रवाना ॥ ८ ॥

janamata marata dusaha dukha hō'ī. ēhi svalpa'u nahim byāpihi sō'ī. 7.
kavanē'um' janma miṭihī nahim gyānā. sunahi sūdra mama bacana pravānā. 8.

But though he shall have to take repeated births as mandated by the curse, he will be freed from uncountable torments and sufferings that are associated with the cycle of birth and death, and from which all living beings invariably suffer. He would be indemnified from this part of the curse. (7)

Besides this indemnity, he would also be blessed by the boon of not losing his wisdom and true knowledge through his different births.'

[To wit, though he will have to take numerous births in different forms of creatures in keeping with the mandate of my curse, but I am hereby granting him two boons—one is that he will not have to face the horrors of birth and death as well as the suffering of life in this gross world, and two, he will retain his spiritual wisdom, be self-realised and enlightened through the entire cycle.]

[After expressing his appreciation of the Brahmin and accepting his prayers aimed at the welfare of his disciple, Lord Shiva turned to the latter who stood there trembling in fear. The Lord told him—] 'Oh you Shudra (i.e. a contemptible person of lowly nature and a dumb wit)! Now listen to my words which are true and inviolable. (8)

रघुपति पुरीं जन्म तव भयऊ । पुनि तैं मम सेवाँ मन दयऊ ॥ ९ ॥
पुरी प्रभाव अनुग्रह मोरें । राम भगति उपजिहि उर तोरें ॥ १० ॥

raghupati purīm janma tava bhaya'ū. puni tairṁ mama sēvām̐ mana daya'ū. 9.
purī prabhāva anugraha mōrēm̐. rāma bhagati upajihi ura tōrēm̐. 10.

First of all you were born in the city or capital of Lord Ram (i.e. at Ayodhya)¹, and secondly you have sincerely devoted yourself in serving and worshipping me². (9)

Now therefore, due to the miraculous power and the positive effect of the Lord's city (in which you spent time of your life) as well as for your serving and worshipping me, I am pleased with you, and it is due to my grace that the spiritual virtue of having devotion and affection for Lord Ram would spontaneously spring up in your bosom. (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 97.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 105.]

सुनु मम बचन सत्य अब भाई । हरितोषन ब्रत द्विज सेवकाई ॥ ११ ॥
अब जनि करहि बिप्र अपमाना । जानेसु संत अनंत समाना ॥ १२ ॥

sunu mama bacana satya aba bhā'ī. haritōṣana brata dvija sēvakā'ī. 11.
aba jani karahi bipra apamānā. jānēsu santa ananta samānā. 12.

Now listen brother (sunu --- aba bhā'ī)¹ to my words that are true and inviolable. Service to learned and wise Brahmins is the path or means that pleases Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu). (11)

Henceforth, never insult a Brahmin (in your life). Always treat saints and pious people as being equivalent to the eternal and supreme Lord God himself². (12)

[Note—¹When Lord Shiva addresses the Shudra with the word “brother— *bhāī*”, it clearly shows that his anger has subsided and he has forgiven the offender. Earlier the Lord had used words of condemnation for him—such as (a) *hatabhāgya agya abhimānī*, (b) *saṭha*, and (c) *khala* in Chaupai line nos. 1, 3 and 4 that precede Doha no. 107 herein above during this episode.

²Lord Shiva has qualified those Brahmins who deserve respect by saying that they should be ‘saintly’. This is true and it implies that not all Brahmins deserve to be revered like God. Surely no one would be inspired to show any respect to a fallen Brahmin who has gone astray from his noble path, one who does not follow the principles of Dharma like the ones described hereinbefore in this narration when the characters of Kaliyug are being enumerated. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 98 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 99; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 100; (iv) Chanda line nos. 7-9 that precedes Doha no. 101.]

इंद्र कुलिस मम सूल बिसाला । कालदंड हरि चक्र कराला ॥ १३ ॥
जो इन्ह कर मारा नहिं मरई । बिप्रद्रोह पावक सो जरई ॥ १४ ॥

indra kulisa mama sūla bisālā. kāladaṇḍa hari cakra karālā. 13.
jō inha kara mārā nahīm mara'ī. bipradrōha pāvaka sō jara'ī. 14.

Someone who may not be killed or harmed by any of the four—(i) the strong weapon of Indra (the king of gods), a weapon called Vajra (which is the strongest and an invincible weapon in existence), (ii) my own (Shiva's) Trident, (iii) the Danda of Kaal (i.e. by the baton of the God of Death), or (iv) by the Chakra of Lord Hari (i.e. the serrated discus used by Lord Vishnu as his infallible weapon) [13]—

—Even he cannot escape the wrath of a Brahmin, for he would be reduced to ash by the fierce fire symbolised by opposition to a Brahmin, or harbouring enmity or hatred for him [14]. (13-14)

अस बिबेक राखेहु मन माहीं । तुम्ह कहँ जग दुर्लभ कछु नाहीं ॥ १५ ॥
औरउ एक आसिषा मोरी । अप्रतिहत गति होइहि तोरी ॥ १६ ॥

asa bibēka rākhēhu mana māhīm. tumha kaham'jaga durlabha kachu nāhīm.
15.
aura'u ēka āsiṣā mōrī. apratihata gati hō'ihi tōrī. 16.

Beware of this and keep it in your mind. Then nothing shall be inaccessible or impossible to achieve for you in this world.

[To wit, if you are careful to show respect to your elders who are saintly, wise and learned like the Brahmins I am talking about, and added to this will be my boon that devotion for Lord Ram will sprout in your bosom, then be assured that nothing would be impossible for you to achieve in your life in this world.] (15)

Besides all these (i.e. the boons or favours I have already granted you), I hereby bless you with another special boon in addition to what you are already blessed with—and it is that you will possess such mystical powers that will enable you to attain whatever you wish, you will be able to go wherever you wish and no barriers would hinder you.

[To wit, you shall have a transcendental reach. Despite your being a creature with a gross body, your soul would be empowered to reach transcendental heights and a level of existence where physical barriers of the world do not matter.]” (16)

दो०. सुनि सिव बचन हरषि गुर एवमस्तु इति भाषि ।
मोहि प्रबोधि गयउ गृह संभु चरन उर राखि ॥ १०९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

suni siva bacana haraṣi gura ēvamastu iti bhāṣi.
mōhi prabōdhi gaya'u gr̥ha sambhu carana ura rākhi. 109 (a).

My Guru was exhilarated when he heard the words of Lord Shiva. He endorsed them by saying ‘So be it’.

After that, he comforted and reassured me and taught me wisdom in many ways. Then enshrining Lord Shiva’s holy feet in his heart, he went home. (Doha no. 109-a)

प्रेरित काल बिंधि गिरि जाइ भयउँ मैं ब्याल ।
पुनि प्रयास बिनु सो तनु तजेउँ गएँ कछु काल ॥ १०९ (ख) ॥

prērita kāla bindhi giri jā'i bhaya'um̐ maim̐ byāla.
puni prayāsa binu sō tanu tajē'um̐ ga'ēm̐ kachu kāla. 109 (b).

In due course of time and driven by my fate, I became a serpent (according to the curse) and went to live in a place called Vindhyachal. [It is a low mountain range with dense forests. I went there in my next birth as a serpent and lived in the hollow of some tree there.]

After the passage of some time, I discarded that body of a snake without any effort or trouble¹. (Doha no. 109-b)

[Note—¹This refers to the natural process whereby a serpent sheds its external skin called the cuticle without the least effort.]

जोइ तनु धरउँ तजउँ पुनि अनायास हरिजान ।
जिमि नूतन पट पहिरइ नर परिहरइ पुरान ॥ १०९ (ग) ॥

jō'i tanu dhara'um̐ taja'um̐ puni anāyāsa harijāna.
jimi nūtana paṭa pahira'i nara parihara'i purāna. 109 (c).

Oh the servant of Lord Hari (or the mount of Lord Hari—“*harijāna*”; i.e. Garud)! Whatever forms I had to repeatedly assume and then discard at the end of their tenures in this world, I did so effortlessly and without even knowing or being aware of anything.

It was just like a person donning a new set of clothes after discarding the old one¹. (Doha no. 109-c)

[Note—¹To wit, in accordance with the blessings of Lord Shiva that was endorsed by my Guru, I didn't feel the pain of birth and death. Though I had to repeatedly be born as a lowly creature such as a bird or an animal, it was as simple as a person changing clothes. This is because Lord Shiva had blessed me that I will retain spiritual wisdom, and be self-realised and enlightened in all my births. Thus, I could understand that my true 'self' is not the gross physical body that suffered due to old age and died, but it was my 'Atma', my soul, that is pure consciousness and an eternal entity that is independent from the body. This wisdom made me detached from the physical body in which my 'Atma' lived. And when the time came to leave the body of any given birth, I simply migrated to a new home in the next body. I left the old home to live in a new home. This transition was like someone taking off his old and worn-out clothes and wearing new and fresher ones.]

सिवँ राखी श्रुति नीति अरु मैं नहिं पावा क्लेस ।

एहि बिधि धरेउँ बिबिधि तनु ग्यान न गयउ खगेस ॥ १०९ (घ) ॥

sivam̐ rākhī śruti nīti aru maim̐ nahim̐ pāvā klēsa.

ēhi bidhi dharē'um̐ bibidhi tanu gyāna na gaya'u khagēsa. 109 (d).

Lord Shiva upheld the sanctity of the auspicious path of righteous conduct as propounded by the Vedas (by punishing me for my transgression of it when I insulted my Guru), and at the same time I did not have to undergo sufferings and torments (that my misdemeanours could have imposed upon me).

In this way, oh King of Birds, I had to assume countless forms in my different births, but fortunately I did not lose my wisdom and enlightenment.

[To wit, I remained steeped in true knowledge and self-realisation as a boon granted by Lord Shiva and endorsed by my Guru. This boon stood me in good stead and helped me to glide over the rough and tumble of countless births and deaths like a bird which glides smoothly in the sky and avoids all the obstacles of land while travelling from one place to another.] (Doha no. 109-d)

चौ०. त्रिजग देव नर जोड़ तनु धरऊँ । तहँ तहँ राम भजन अनुसरऊँ ॥ १ ॥

एक सूल मोहि बिसर न काऊ । गुर कर कोमल सील सुभाऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

trijaga dēva nara jō'i tanu dhara'ūm̐. taham̐ taham̐ rāma bhajana anusara'ūm̐.

1.

ēka sūla mōhi bisara na kā'ū. gura kara kōmala sīla subhā'ū. 2.

In whatever form I took birth—whether as a Trjag (animal and bird), or some form of junior god (i.e. as a demi-god or as a spirit form), or as a human being (with its three genders, male, female and neuter, a wide variety of ethnic divisions, sects, classes and levels of living)—in all my births I managed to remain steady in my worship of Lord Ram and have devotion for the Lord¹. (1)

But there was one thing which kept nagging inside me and pricked my conscience constantly, making me feel ever so remorseful. And it was that I just could not forget the amiable disposition of my Guru; I could not forget his kind, compassionate, merciful and courteous nature². (2)

[Note—¹To wit, by the blessings of Lord Shiva and the grace of my Guru, there was one constant thing that helped me keep myself steady and maintain my balance in my spiritual quest during my journey through all the different wombs in which I had to travel in accordance with the fiat of my fate. And this single stabilising factor was that I kept on worshipping Lord Ram and having devotion for the Lord inspite of all the challenges and adversities, all the miseries and torments that I had to face. This simple method served as a boon for me as it helped me to be happy and blissful throughout my journey. It also helped me by gradually neutralising the evil effects of my misdemeanours and sins as well as the negative consequences of the curse of Lord Shiva, and replacing it with spiritual merit that went on accumulating and quietly lifting me, step-by-step, out of the quagmire of sufferings and miseries to which I had earlier been condemned for ever.

²I felt so sorry and regretful that I had been so irreverent, so thankless and so ungrateful to such an affectionate teacher as my Guru who had been so exceptionally kind-hearted as not to have ever taken any offence at my stupid and vile behaviour when I had repeatedly neglected his advice and did not hesitate to insult him. Instead of punishing me or cursing me, he had always shown love and concern for me even as he tried his best to bring me to my senses. Then when Lord Shiva could not cope with my arrogance and sinful behaviour and had cursed me vehemently, my Guru had interceded on my behalf and persuaded Lord Shiva to forgive me. My Guru's caring nature and his love and concern for me weighed heavily on my conscience all through my journey in various lives.

I felt extremely ashamed of myself and lamented gravely that I did not have even basic sense of courtesy and decency to say 'I am sorry' to him. I always remembered my Guru with the greatest of respect and affection for him, and my heart felt very heavy and full of remorse throughout the different births I took as time passed.]

चरम देह द्विज कै मैं पाई । सुर दुर्लभ पुरान श्रुति गाई ॥ ३ ॥

खेलउँ तहूँ बालकन्ह मीला । करउँ सकल रघुनायक लीला ॥ ४ ॥

carama dēha dvija kai mairṁ pā'ī. sura durlabha purāna śruti gā'ī. 3.

khēla'um' tahūm' bālakanha mīlā. kara'um' sakala raghunāyaka līlā. 4.

By and by, I was fortunate to get the body of a Brahmin¹, a body that is lauded by the Vedas and Purans when they declare that it is rare for even the gods to acquire it. (3)

While I was a child in this birth, I used to mingle with other ordinary children of my age and play with them, but with a difference—and it was that during my plays I used to re-enact the many episodes associated with the life and time of Lord Ram². (4)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund observed: “I had been worshipping and adoring Lord Ram in all the births that I took during my long journey through this world as I have already mentioned in previous verses. As a natural reward of this wise and auspicious deed of mine, I was slowly elevated to be finally born as a Brahmin during my next birth as a human being. Amongst all the humans, this form, i.e. the body of a Brahmin, is regarded with great esteem as it is the senior-most class of humans in the hierarchy of society so much so that even the gods show their respect to a Brahmin.”

Remember: The importance of Brahmin is obvious from the fact that it was one reason why Lord Shiva had cursed me—I had shown disrespect to a Brahmin.

The superior nature of the human body as compared to all other forms that the soul has to assume during the course of its journey through different wombs in the cycle of birth and death in this world has been emphasised in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 86.

²To wit, I used to re-enact the many playful activities of the Lord when he was a child like me during his manifestation as a human being. As I grew up, I staged many plays that commemorated many episodes of Lord Ram’s life. Unlike other children who indulged in childish activities that are natural and normal for a human child, and found interest in the things of the world, I loved to spend my time remembering Lord Ram by way of replaying the many incidences of his life as part of my childhood indulgences. In this way, I managed to remember the Lord and exhibited a subtle spiritual trait in me even during my early life as a child when ordinarily it would be expected of me that I would behave more normally like other children of my age who rarely ever think of spiritualism or remember the Lord simply because they aren’t even aware of such things.]

प्रौढ़ भएँ मोहि पिता पढ़ावा । समझउँ सुनउँ गुनउँ नहिं भावा ॥ ५ ॥

मन ते सकल बासना भागी । केवल राम चरन लय लागी ॥ ६ ॥

praur̥ha bha'ēm̐ mōhi pitā paṛhāvā. samajha'um̐ suna'um̐ guna'um̐ nahim̐ bhāvā. 5.

mana tē sakala bāsanā bhāgī. kēvala rāma carana laya lāgī. 6.

When I grew up, my father began teaching me (on secular subjects like all fathers do to prepare their off-springs to face the rough and tumble of the world in the future). I tried to understand whatever was being taught to me, I tried to attentively hear and focus my mind on the lessons being taught, and I tried to reflect and analyse whatever was being taught to me, but I could not bring myself around to find any interest in reading and studying any of these things that my father wanted to teach me. None of

them appealed to my mind or heart, and I found no attraction in the subjects taught. (5)

All Vasanas (worldly cravings, desires, passions and longings) were gradually erased from my Mana (my inner being; from my mind and heart). On the contrary, I was solely absorbed in the thoughts of Lord Ram and my Mana only remembered the holy feet of the Lord¹. (6)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund observed further: “My father tried his best to teach me many subjects of the secular world in order to make me qualified and grow up as an educated and learned Brahmin like him so that I would be able to stand on my own two feet and get respect in the society when I became an adult and settled as a householder. But my soul was anchored elsewhere. My heart and mind were rooted in spiritualism and my soul lived in a transcendental world of pure consciousness, as opposed to the existence in the temporal world that ordinary human beings do. Therefore, all efforts of my father fell flat, and I just could not focus my attention on learning worldly subjects.

On the contrary, my mind and heart developed dispassion and detachment from the gross world of sense objects and its countless temptations. I developed deep and enduring love and affection for Lord Ram; my mind and heart were focused on the holy feet of the Lord and I remembered them even while my father was trying to teach me.

The result was I could not focus on my studies, and from the perspective of my unfortunate father I was a hopeless son of a low intellect, one who was fidgety, dull-headed and good for nothing. I am so sorry that I had disappointed him; I am so sorry that he may have felt remorseful, dejected and depressed because of me.”

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precedes Doha no. 109 where Lord Shiva has blessed Kaagbhusund that he would have steady and abiding spiritual knowledge and wisdom as well as devotion and affection for Lord Ram in whatever birth he takes.

The human body is a blessing that the Atma or the soul of a living being gets for its meritorious deeds and auspicious way of life. One would be wise if one does not misuse this body by taking liberty and allowing oneself to get entangled in the web of worldly delusions and temptations. This human body is like a two-edged sword—on the one hand it can be used by the creature to free him from the endless cycle of birth and death and achieve final liberation from this tangle, and on the other hand if this body is mishandled then it can land the creature in a situation where it is pushed back into the lower end of the cycle of birth and death from which he has risen after having to suffer immensely through countless rounds of torturous wonderings in different births.

The objective of the human body is not to get tempted by the illusionary charms of the gross world and its equally gross attractions that tend to pull down the soul of the creature and dunk it in the bottomless cesspool of spiritual miseries and torments. On the contrary, the human body should be used to attain spiritual purity, piety and holiness that provides the creature abiding peace and happiness as well as an opportunity to find liberation and deliverance from the world of transmigration. The human body should be the tool to attain emancipation and salvation of the soul instead of forcing the soul to get bogged down and get enmeshed in the web of sufferings and grief by getting tempted by the delusions that are created by the sense objects of this material world.

The next important point is that there are two established paths that help the creature in his birth as a human being to achieve his spiritual objectives of attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. One of the two paths is the metaphysical path of “Gyan”, or the path of self-realisation, of acquiring truthful knowledge of the self, spiritual wisdom and enlightenment. This is achieved by a plethora of means as advised in the Upanishads and other scriptures. The other path is “Bhakti”, the path of having undiluted devotion and true affection for Lord God, the path of total submission to Lord God. This second path of Bhakti is simple and easy to implement as it needs no special efforts or skills to attain success.

Further, the path of Bhakti has been endorsed by Lord Ram himself. Hence, Kaagbhusund was wise to choose this path over the other path of Gyan as is clear in the present verses.

The importance of the human body and its role in the spiritual welfare of the creature, as well as the important role that Bhakti plays in the fulfillment of the spiritual needs of the creature have been explicitly stressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 44.]

कहु खगेस अस कवन अभागी । खरी सेव सुरधेनुहि त्यागी ॥ ७ ॥
प्रेम मगन मोहि कछु न सोहाई । हारेउ पिता पढ़ाई पढ़ाई ॥ ८ ॥

kahu khagēsa asa kavana abhāgī. khārī sēva suradhēnuhi tyāgī. 7.
prēma magana mōhi kachu na sōhāī. hārē'u pitā paṛhā'i paṛhā'i. 8.

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa)! Say, who would be so foolish to abandon a all wish-fulfilling cow called Kaamdheni and instead serve a worthless she-donkey¹? (7)

Since I was always overwhelmed by the thoughts of Lord Ram and remained submerged in his loving memory, nothing else charmed me and I felt no attraction for anything pertaining to this world (as my father expected me to have). [To wit, from all practical purposes, I appeared to be disoriented as if I was day-dreaming and lacking in attention.]

My father got fed-up trying to teach me in different ways. [He tried all the tricks that he could think of, and he tried all means of persuasion that he could imagine to make me focus on my studies, but since I lacked interest in this world and its mundane affairs, his teachings made me bored and I paid no attention to them. He was patient like my Guru in my early life, but as time passed he realised that I was a lost case. So he gave up trying to teach me.] (8)

[Note—¹Here, having devotion for Lord Ram and worshipping the Lord is likened to the all wish-fulfilling holy cow known as Kaamdheni; and preparing oneself to serve the interest of the world is like the service rendered unto the she-donkey.

Kaagbhusund means that he would have been foolish to spend his time in learning those subjects that would have prepared him to do service of the world when he grew up to become an adult and a householder like his father wanted him to do. He says that it was his conscious and well thought decision to leave this path, and instead take up the path that would lead him to his spiritual welfare by developing devotion, love and faith in Lord Ram.

This service rendered to Lord Ram would help him get whatever rewards that he wished to have, and there is no better thing than having lasting happiness, joy, peace, contentedness and bliss in one's life. On the other hand, being of service to the gross and selfish world would have embroiled him a constant cycle of miseries, grief, torments and sorrows.]

भए कालबस जब पितु माता । मैं बन गयउँ भजन जनत्राता ॥ ९ ॥
जहँ जहँ बिपिन मुनीस्वर पावउँ । आश्रम जाइ जाइ सिरु नावउँ ॥ १० ॥

bha'ē kālabasa jaba pitu mātā. mair̥m bana gaya'um̐ bhajana janatrātā. 9.
jaham̐ jaham̐ bipina munīsvara pāva'um̐. āśrama jā'i jā'i siru nāva'um̐. 10.

When my parents died in due course of time, I (withdrew myself from the world and household affairs, and) went to the forest to worship and offer my services to the Lord who is a protector of his devotees and eliminates their sorrows and torments (“janatrātā”—i.e. Lord Ram).

[Since I had no interest in the world and household affairs, I renounced everything after my parents' death and headed to the forest to become a monk or an ascetic to spend the rest of my life worshipping Lord Ram and doing service to him in whatever humble way I could do.] (9)

During my wanderings through the forest, whenever I found hermitages of sages and seers I would go there and pay my obeisance to them by bowing my head before them in reverence. (10)

बूझउँ तिन्हहि राम गुन गाहा । कहहिं सुनउँ हरषित खगनाहा ॥ ११ ॥
सुनत फिरउँ हरि गुन अनुबादा । अब्याहत गति संभु प्रसादा ॥ १२ ॥

būjha'um̐ tin̐hahi rāma guna gāhā. kahahir̥m suna'um̐ haraṣita khaganāhā. 11.
sunata phira'um̐ hari guna anubādā. abyāhata gati sambhu prasādā. 12.

Oh the King of Birds (khaganāhā)! I used to request them to recount for me the many wonderful stories associated with Lord Ram and his eclectic glories and divine deeds. They delightfully used to narrate them to me, and I used to hear them with joy and exhilaration. (11)

In this way I always used to roam about hearing the glories, the virtues and the many stories describing the holiness and divinity of Lord Hari (being recited at the different hermitages of sages and seers).

By Lord Shiva's grace, I could go unhindered and unchecked to any place that I wished to visit (and I was always welcomed wherever I went)¹. (12)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 109.]

छूटी त्रिबिधि ईषना गाढ़ी । एक लालसा उर अति बाढ़ी ॥ १३ ॥
 राम चरन बारिज जब देखौं । तब निज जन्म सफल करि लेखौं ॥ १४ ॥

chūṭī tribidhi īṣanā gāṛhī. ēka lālasā ura ati bāṛhī. 13.

rāma carana bārija jaba dēkhaum̐. taba nija janma saphala kari lēkhaum̐. 14.

All the three types of longings that are usually firmly entrenched in a person's mind and heart in his life (such as desire to have a worthy son, desire for wealth, and desire for fame and good name) had already left me very early in my life (or I had myself voluntarily left them)¹.

The only desire that lasted inside me and grew in intensity as time passed [13] --- was to someday have a divine glimpse of the holy feet of Lord Ram as this was the only way I would regard my life as being fulfilled and myself as being accomplished [14]. (13-14)

[Note—¹Refer: Chaupai line no. 6 hereinbefore.]

जेहि पूँछउँ सोइ मुनि अस कहई । ईस्वर सर्व भूतमय अहई ॥ १५ ॥
 निर्गुन मत नहिं मोहि सोहाई । सगुन ब्रह्म रति उर अधिकाई ॥ १६ ॥

jēhi pūm̐cha'um̐ sō'i muni asa kahaī. īsvara sarba bhūtamaya ahaī. 15.

nirguna mata nahim̐ mōhi sōhāī. saguna brahma rati ura adhikāī. 16.

Every sage or seer from whom I asked this question (i.e. every wise and enlightened person to whom I expressed my desire to learn how to have a divine vision of Lord Ram and his holy feet) told me that the Supreme Being, the Lord God (īsvara), is all pervading and omnipresent, and reveals himself in the form of all living beings¹. (15)

But this 'Nirguna form' of the Lord did not appeal to me. My heart was longing for the 'Saguna form' of the Lord (i.e. a form that is easily accessible, that is easily understandable even by a common man, that can be known and visualised and worshipped and adored like the physical form of Lord Ram, though the Lord's actual and primary form was the cosmic form of the 'Ishwar' that is invisible and all-pervading)². (16)

[Note—¹This view of course is true, and it is the standard and the universally accepted principle of metaphysics as enunciated in the Upanishads. It primarily says that the 'Ishwar' is a name given to the cosmic Consciousness, and the same Consciousness lives inside all living beings as their Atma or soul. To wit, a living being is simply a microcosmic form of Ishwar, for the latter is the macrocosmic form of pure Consciousness. This cosmic and all-pervading form of the Lord God is called the "Nirguna form" as it is invisible, beyond perception, spread uniformly throughout this creation, and not limited to any specific characters or qualities that can be measured or known.

²The "Nirguna form" of the Lord is preferred by wise and learned sages, but the more accessible form known as "Saguna form" is the preference of devotees because it is

easy to relate to in a visible world where things that are seen and felt are more relevant to a creature in his day-to-day life. The Saguna form of the Lord helps a person in his worship and offering of service to Lord God as it is easy to visualise and have access to. Even an ordinary person who has to carry out his worldly responsibilities with little time that he can spare for learning the scriptures, one who is not too well equipped mentally to understand the esoteric philosophy of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism, one who does not have the intellectual reach to comprehend mystical matters related to the spirit and its destiny, subjects that are so mysterious and complicated for him that he would rather avoid them—such ordinary souls find it easy to offer worship and have devotion for an entity that they can see and hear about, i.e. the “Saguna form of the Lord”, as compared to an entity that is invisible, is beyond comprehension and therefore seems to be very abstract for him, i.e. the “Nirguna form of the same Lord”.

There is principally no difference between the two aspects of Brahm, the Supreme Being, known as “Nirguna” and “Saguna” forms. Simply put, the ‘Saguna form’ is the embodied form of Brahm that has attributes, while the ‘Nirguna form’ is the disembodied or ethereal form of Brahm that has no specific attributes. They are the two sides of the same coin. An individual chooses a form that suits his own intellectual abilities, temperament and likings in order to attain his spiritual goal in life.

In the context of the two forms of the Lord God known as “Nirguna form” and “Saguna form”, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 23; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 116.]

दो०. गुर के बचन सुरति करि राम चरन मनु लाग ।

रघुपति जस गावत फिरउँ छन छन नव अनुराग ॥ ११० (क) ॥

dōhā.

gura kē bacana surati kari rāma carana manu lāga.

raghupati jasa gāvata phira'um̐ chana chana nava anurāga. 110 (a).

I remembered the words of my revered Guru (of my previous life), and therefore my Mana (mind and heart) were rooted in having affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram (as advised by him)¹.

So I roamed about ecstatically singing and praising the wonderful glories and divine stories of Lord Ram with devotion and love for the Lord getting enhanced in me every moment of my life as time passed. (Doha no. 110-a)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 106, and Doha no. 109-a. The Guru had advised Kaagbhusund during his previous life that the reward for worshipping Shiva is to have devotion for Lord Ram, and when Lord Shiva himself blessed Kaagbhusund that he would have eternal devotion for Lord Ram, his Guru felt very happy and endorsed this boon.

Now in the present life of a Brahmin, Kaagbhusund fondly remembered that earlier time and decided to follow his Guru's instructions.]

मेरु सिखर बट छायाँ मुनि लोमस आसीन ।

देखि चरन सिरु नायउँ बचन कहेउँ अति दीन ॥ ११० (ख) ॥

mēru sikhara baṭa chāyām̐ muni lōmasa āsīna.
dēkhi carana siru nāya'um̐ bacana kahē'um̐ ati dīna. 110 (b).

[Roaming like a carefree friar and merrily singing the glories of Lord Ram—] I once reached the summit of a mountain known as Meru where I saw a great sage named Lomas sitting in a meditative posture under the shade of a banyan tree.

Seeing him, I bowed my head most reverentially at his feet and paid my obeisance to him in very polite and humble words. (Doha no. 110-b)

सुनि मम बचन बिनीत मृदु मुनि कृपाल खगराज ।
मोहि सादर पूँछत भए द्विज आयहु केहि काज ॥ ११० (ग) ॥

suni mama bacana binīta mṛdu muni kṛpāla khagarāja.
mōhi sādara pūm̐chata bha'e dvija āyahu kēhi kāja. 110 (c).

Oh the King of Birds (khagarāja)! When the most merciful sage heard my polite and humble words showing respect to him, he reciprocated my gesture by being equally polite to me and asked me affectionately, “Oh Brahmin! What is the work for which you have come here?” (Doha no. 110-c)

तब मैं कहा कृपानिधि तुम्ह सबैग्य सुजान ।
सगुन ब्रह्म अवराधन मोहि कहहु भगवान ॥ ११० (घ) ॥

taba main kahā kṛpānidhi tumha sarbagya sujāna.
saguna brahma avarādhana mōhi kahahu bhagavāna. 110 (d).

Then I said, ‘Oh merciful one (kṛpānidhi)! You are all-knowing and wise. Oh you blessed One (bhagavāna)! Please be kind to enlighten me about the way of worshipping and having devotion for the Saguna (visible) form of Brahm (i.e. a form which I can easily identify and relate to at a personal level; a form that would make it convenient for me to worship and have devotion for the Supreme Being).¹ [(Doha no. 110-d)

[Note—¹The ‘Nirguna form’ of the Supreme Being is too abstract and difficult to focus on as it not visible and has no physical attributes. Though it is the true form of the Supreme Being as he represents cosmic Consciousness which is a sublime and subtle entity that is all-pervading, invisible and without attributes, yet from a practical point of view it is too far away, too abstract and too hypothetical to be easily understood and accessed by a common devotee with an ordinary knowledge, wisdom and intellect. Highly enlightened, disciplined, erudite, sagacious and self-realised ascetics, hermits and sages could meditate and contemplate on this Nirguna form of Brahm successfully, but it is beyond the reach of ordinary souls.

Thus, in order to provide such humble souls the opportunity to derive a spiritual benefit that would be equivalent to that got by great sages and ascetics, the scriptures devised a device in the form of worshipping and having devotion for the ‘Saguna form’ of the same Brahm. Lord Ram is a sterling and a living example of the ‘Saguna form’ of the primarily ‘Nirguna form’ of Brahm, the Supreme Being representing the cosmic Consciousness.]

चौ०. तब मुनीस रघुपति गुन गाथा । कहे कछुक सादर खगनाथा ॥ १ ॥
 ब्रह्मग्यान रत मुनि बिग्यानी । मोहि परम अधिकारी जानी ॥ २ ॥
 लागे करन ब्रह्म उपदेसा । अज अद्वैत अगुन हृदयेसा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

taba munīsa raghupati guna gāthā. kahē kachuka sādara khaganāthā. 1.
 brahmagyāna rata muni bigyānī. mōhi parama adhikārī jānī. 2.
 lāgē karana brahma upadēsā. aja advaita aguna hṛdayēsā. 3.

Oh the Lord of Birds (khaganāthā—i.e. Garud)! Then the great sage reverentially narrated some of the divine stories associated with the glories of Lord Ram. (1)

Then that great and learned sage who was well-steeped in the knowledge of Brahm and was most wise and enlightened, thought that I was eligible to be initiated into receiving the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to Brahm (the cosmic form of the Supreme Being that is pure Consciousness). (2)

So he started preaching me about Brahm. He told me that Brahm was without a birth (aja), non-dual (advaita), without attributes (aguna), and the Lord who dwells in the subtle heart of all living beings (hṛdayēsā—and as such knows all the thoughts and emotions of a creature even if he does not express them outwardly). (3)

अकल अनीह अनाम अरूपा । अनुभव गज्ज अखंड अनूपा ॥ ४ ॥
 मन गोतीत अमल अबिनासी । निर्बिकार निरवधि सुख रासी ॥ ५ ॥
 सो तैं ताहि तोहि नहिं भेदा । बारि बीचि इव गावहिं बेदा ॥ ६ ॥

akala anīha anāma arūpā. anubhava gamya akhaṇḍa anūpā. 4.
 mana gōtīta amala abināsī. nirbikāra niravadhi sukha rāsī. 5.
 sō taim tāhi tōhi nahim bhēdā. bāri bīci iva gāvahim bēdā. 6.

Brahm is beyond comprehension and reach of the mind (akala), has no desires or wishes (anīha), has no name (anāma) or a form (arūpā). Brahm can only be experienced and known or realised in a subtle way by experiencing his presence everywhere, both inside and outside one’s self (anubhava gamya). He is immutable and indivisible (akhaṇḍa), as well as so unique that there is nothing with which it can be compared or treated as being parallel with (anūpā). (4)

He (Brahm; the Supreme Being) is beyond the reach of the Mana (mind and heart combine) and the perception of the sense organs of a creature (*mana gōtita*). He is immaculate and pure (*amala*), imperishable and indestructible (*abināsi*), without any shortcomings, faults or taints of any kind (*nirbikāra*), limitless, endless and measureless (*niravadhi*), and a fount or treasury of spiritual bliss, joy and happiness (*sukha rāsi*). (5)

The Vedas sing in an unanimous voice or declare and affirm (*gāvahiṃ bēdā*) that there is no difference between an individual soul known as the Jiva (living being) and the Supreme Soul known as Brahm (the Supreme Being) by saying ‘You are him, and he is you; there is no distinction between the two of you’ (*sō taim tāhi tōhi nahim bhēdā*) just like the case of there being no difference between water and its currents (*nahim bhēdā. bāri bīci iva*)¹. (6)

[Note—¹This is the universal spiritual Truth as expounded and espoused in the Upanishads. It is one of the principle Mahavakyas or the great sayings of the Upanishads.

The Mahavakyas are as follows—(i) ‘Brahm Is Consciousness’ (Pragnanam Brahm) appears in Aiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda. It means that Atma/consciousness, which gives life to the material layers consisting of the five sheaths of the creature, is the same as the Supreme Reality/Truth behind the entire universe/creation called by the name of Brahm; (ii) ‘That Thou Art’ (Tat Twam Asi) is found in the Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda. It means that the infinite, all-pervading, omniscient Supreme Truth/Reality is the consciousness or pure self in you. It is also called a statement of advice to the seekers in as much as it contains advice addressed to the seeker that the supreme reality is the self within him; (iii) ‘This Self Is Brahm’ (Ayam Atma Brahm) is found in the Mandukya Upanishad in the Atharva Veda. It means that the Atma which is self illuminated and the Supreme Reality/Truth are one and the same (i.e. identical); (iv) I Am Brahm (Aham Brahm Asmi) is found in the Brihadaranyak Upanishad of the Yajur Veda. It proclaims that the conscious principle/element in an individual is nothing other than the total consciousness. This is the statement made by the seeker after attaining self realisation.

There are a number of Upanishads that describe these great sayings, the Mahavakyas, of the Vedas:--

- (i) Rig Veda—Atmabodha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 2, 4; Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-3.
- (ii) Sam Veda—Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 6, section 16, verse no. 3 (Tattwamasi); Sanyas Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 48; Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 82-83.
- (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda—Paingal Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 2-5; Canto 4, verse nos. 23-28; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahman 2, section 2, verse no. 5; Brahman 2, section 4, verse no. 4; Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 6; Brahman 3, section 2, verse no. 2; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 10 (So-a-Ham), 30-31 (Tattwamasi); Subal Upanishad, Section/Canto 6, verse nos. 2-7.
- (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shuk-Rahasyo-panishad, verse no. 22; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 18-19; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 12-14; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 32, 37; Avadhut Upanishad, verse no. 2 (Tattwamasi); Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 60-74; Canto 5, verse no. 5; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 28 (So-a-ham); Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34,

78-79; Brahm Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 8; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133..

(v) Atharva Veda—Atma Upanishad, specially verse no. 1-C, 1-D, 1-E, 8, and 22-25; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 7, verse no. 8; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15; Canto 6, paragraph no. 22; Canto 8, paragraph nos. 5-6; Ram Rahasya Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 13-14; Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 2; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 9; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 2, 8, 20-21, 57, 65, 74, 95; Mahavakya Upanishad, verse nos. 6-9, 11; Hayagriva Upanishad, verse no. 15; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, paragraph nos. 3-4; Canto 7, verse no. 8; Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad, paragraph nos. 3-4; Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 20.]

बिबिधि भँति मोहि मुनि समुझावा । निर्गुन मत मम हृदयँ न आवा ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि मैं कहेउँ नाइ पद सीसा । सगुन उपासन कहहु मुनीसा ॥ ८ ॥

bibidhi bhāmṭi mōhi muni samujhāvā. nirguna mata mama hrdayam̐ na āvā.
7.

puni maim̐ kahē'um̐ nā'i pada sīsā. saguna upāsana kahahu munīsā. 8.

The sage tried his best to teach me in various ways, but the philosophy that espouses the Nirguna form of Brahm did not appeal to my heart. (7)

So I remained uninterested, and once again bowed my head reverentially at the feet of the sage and said most politely, “Oh Sage, please teach me the Saguna form of worship and devotion of Brahm. (8)

राम भगति जल मम मन मीना । किमि बिलगाइ मुनीस प्रबीना ॥ ९ ॥
सोइ उपदेस कहहु करि दाया । निज नयनन्हि देखौं रघुराया ॥ १० ॥

rāma bhagati jala mama mana mīnā. kimi bilagā'i munīsa prabīnā. 9.
sō'i upadēsa kahahu kari dāyā. nija nayanānhi dēkhaur̐ raghurāyā. 10.

My Mana (mind, heart and soul) is immersed and absorbed in the thoughts of Lord Ram (and I love the Lord and hold him dear to me) just like a fish that wishes to remain immersed in water (and cannot afford to be separated from it even for a moment).

Oh wise sage (munīsā prabīnā)! In this situation, how can it (my Mana) be separated from it (the thoughts of Lord Ram). [To wit, I can't think of anything else but Lord Ram. So please don't try to teach me about Nirguna Brahm as this subject does not interest me at all.] (9)

So therefore, please be kind and gracious enough to teach me that method and show me that way by which I can see Lord Ram with my eyes. [Please tell me how I can have a glimpse of the Saguna form of Lord Ram, the form that is visible to my eyes. I am not interested in the Lord's ethereal, cosmic, all-pervading and invisible form that

defies my imagination and comprehension. I am not mentally capable or emotionally prepared to accept that knowledge.] (10)

भरि लोचन बिलोकि अवधेसा । तब सुनिहउँ निर्गुन उपदेसा ॥ ११ ॥
मुनि पुनि कहि हरिकथा अनूपा । खंडि सगुन मत अगुन निरूपा ॥ १२ ॥

bhari lōcana bilōki avadhēsā. taba suniha'um' nirguna upadēsā. 11.
muni puni kahi harikathā anūpā. khaṇḍi saguna mata aguna nirūpā. 12.

First let me fill my eyes with a divine sight of the Lord of Ayodhya (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) and let me feel fully contented by this view. After that I would listen to your teaching about the Nirguna form of the Lord.” (11)

The sage repeated his earlier approach (stance or method) of first narrating some of the divine stories associated with the Saguna form of Lord Ram, and then he argued against the philosophy of worshipping the Saguna (embodied) form of the Lord that espouses that the Holy Spirit also exists in an embodied form even as it exists in its ethereal and cosmic form. The sage once again emphasised on the importance and the supremacy of the Nirguna (ethereal and disembodied) form of the Lord and the ways to attain it. (12)

तब मैं निर्गुन मत कर दूरी । सगुन निरूपउँ करि हठ भूरी ॥ १३ ॥
उत्तर प्रतिउत्तर मैं कीन्हा । मुनि तन भए क्रोध के चीन्हा ॥ १४ ॥

taba maiṁ nirguna mata kara dūrī. saguna nirūpa'um' kari haṭha bhūrī. 13.
uttara prati'uttara maiṁ kīnhā. muni tana bha'ē krōdha kē cīnhā. 14.

When I found that the sage was adamant on teaching me his own version of spirituality and worship of the Supreme Lord that did not appeal to me inspite of me clearly telling him about it, I became dismayed and annoyed. So I retorted by vehemently debunking and denouncing the Nirguna form of worship as espoused by the sage, and instead argued enthusiastically in support of the cause of Saguna form of worship and devotion. (13)

There was a heated argument between the two of us (me and the sage), and the temperature rose to such an extent that there were physical signs (bodily gestures) of resentment arising in the sage, indicating that he was losing his cool and his patience with me, his anger was mounting by the moment, and it appeared that he was on the verge of cursing me. (14)

सुनु प्रभु बहुत अवग्या किएँ । उपज क्रोध ग्यानिह के हिएँ ॥ १५ ॥
अति संघरषन जौँ कर कोई । अनल प्रगट चंदन ते होई ॥ १६ ॥

sunu prabhu bahuta avagyā ki'ēm̃. upaja krōdha gyāninha kē hi'ēm̃. 15.
ati saṅgharaṣana jaum̃ kara kō'ī. anala pragaṭa candana tē hō'ī. 16.

Oh the revered One (“prabhu”—i.e. Garud)! Listen. Irreverence, insolence, rudeness and disgraceful behaviour ignites (or stokes) resentment and anger in the heart of even the wisest and the most learned of persons. (15)

Even if sandalwood (which is inherently deemed to be cool and soothing) is subjected to vigorous friction and hard rubbing, fire will spring out it¹. (16)

[Note—¹My impertinent and irreverent behaviour, my insistence on being initiated to the Saguna form of Bhakti as opposed to what sage Lomus was trying to teach me, and the accompanying heated exchange of words that were exchanged between the two of us amounted to insulting the learned sage Lomus and undermining his wisdom and authority made him so much peeved and annoyed that he soon lost his cool, just like the case of fire being ignited by vigorously rubbing two pieces of sandalwood against each other. I should have shown more discretion and kept to myself even if the sage's doctrines and advice did not appeal to me. I ought to have quietly left the place and go my way if I did not agree with him. Instead of showing basic common sense, I indulged in getting myself embroiled in a heated exchange of words with the illustrious sage. Naturally the sage became wrathful when he found that someone who had come to him to seek some knowledge was trying to undermine his authority and dignity by arguing with him, and discrediting his wisdom and advice.

We note here that Kaagbhusund had shown the same sort of stubbornness and headstrong nature earlier also in his previous life when he had refused to give heed to his Guru and had shown disrespect to the latter which resulted in Lord Shiva cursing him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 105—to Doha no. 109.]

दो०. बारंबार सकोप मुनि करइ निरूपन ग्यान ।

मैं अपने मन बैठ तब करउँ बिबिधि अनुमान ॥ १११ (क) ॥

dōhā.

bārambāra sakōpa muni kara'i nirūpana gyāna.

mair̃ apanēm̃ mana baiṭha taba kara'um̃ bibidhi anumāna. 111 (a).

The sage was overcome with anger and passion as he repeatedly espoused the cause of knowledge pertaining to the Nirguna form of worship and meditation.

Meanwhile, since this line of spiritual wisdom did not appeal to me, I felt distracted and I sat there brooding.

Since I was disinterested in whatever the sage said, my mind began to wander elsewhere and I started thinking of so many other things (as described herein below in the verses that follow). (Doha no. 111-a)

क्रोध कि द्वैतबुद्धि बिनु द्वैत कि बिनु अग्यान ।

मायाबस परिछिन्न जड़ जीव कि ईस समान ॥ १११ (ख) ॥

krōdha ki dvaitabud'dhi binu dvaita ki binu agyāna.
māyābasa parichinna jaṛa jīva ki īsa samāna. 111 (b).

Observing the sage's behaviour I began to wonder how one can have anger without having a sense of duality, and how can there be no ignorance in the presence of duality¹.

[Kaagbhusund also wondered about the validity of the Nirguna form of worship. He thought to himself—] A Jiva (living being) who has an individual personality and is invariably under the influence of Maya (delusions)—how can such a Jiva be equivalent to Brahm, the Supreme Being (as espoused by the philosophy of non-duality)²? (Doha no. 111-b)

[Note—¹The sage's behaviour seemed incompatible with his espoused philosophy of Nirguna which pertains to the metaphysical philosophy of non-duality or 'Advaitya'. According to this philosophy there is no distinction between the visible and the invisible form of Brahm who represents the pure Consciousness. The two forms of Consciousness, i.e. the visible form that has specific virtues and characters and the invisible form that has no specific attributes, are one and the same, and the difference is merely superficial and because of the different level of understanding of different individuals. The instance of there being no fundamental difference between 'water' and its 'currents' is already cited herein above.

The reason is very obvious and simple: the current formed in a river consists of flowing water; if there is no water flowing in the river there is no question of there being any current in it. A dry river does not have any currents in it.

This being the case, there was no reason why the learned sage Lomus should get angry at Kaagbhusund for favouring the Saguna form of Brahm instead of the Nirguna form as desired by the sage. In the first place, the sage himself should have dealt with the subject dispassionately and equitably. He should have been more discreet and ought to have judiciously treated both the Nirguna form of worship and meditation as well as its counterpart known as the Saguna form by saying that they are both the same, that neither one of them is superior to the other. Favouring one philosophy over the other was equivalent to being ignorant of the reality.

The very fact that sage Lomus is angry because his favouring of the philosophy of Nirguna form of worship of Brahm is being challenged by Kaagbhusund shows that the sage did not have self-restraint, was egoist and haughty as he thought that he knew the best though he had no deep knowledge of metaphysical principles and is not as enlightened, wise and self-realised as he pretends to be.

By distinguishing between Nirguna and Saguna forms of worship of the Lord, the sage has proved that he is ignorant about the reality of Brahm.

Therefore Kaagbhusund wondered how this sage deserves the respect he expects from him; how can he show honour to someone who has not even been able to control his passions and emotions as is evident by the sage getting angry at him. 'Anger' and becoming 'passionate about anything' are definitely not good traits by any count, and it is certainly not expected from a learned sage to have them. Thus, Kaagbhusund lost interest in learning anything from someone who himself does not know the subject thoroughly and deeply.

²More doubts overwhelmed the poor Kaagbhusund as he sat there debating the issue in his mind and heart. He pondered over the philosophy of non-duality which affirms

that there is no difference between Brahm (the Supreme Being) and the Jiva (the ordinary living being), and this argument did not seem to hold true to him. The Jiva and Brahm have so many differences and diverse nature that they do not seem to be compatible with each other, there seems to be no convergence between the two. For instance, Jiva is under the influence of Maya whereas Brahm is free from Maya. This is just one of the obvious differences. Other very apparent differences are that the Jiva takes a birth and dies whereas Brahm is eternal; Jiva suffers and undergoes pains whereas Brahm is free from grief and miseries; Jiva has a gross physical body whereas Brahm has no form; and the list goes on and on.

To Kaagbhusund's innocent, simple and un-initiated mind it was absurd to say that Jiva and Brahm are one. The fact is that they are indeed 'one' and not separate from one another—and the reason for this non-duality is that the true identity of the Jiva, the 'Principal Jiva', is not his gross body but his 'Atma' or soul which is 'pure consciousness' and an ethereal entity, and this Atma is the same as the 'Parmatma' or the 'Supreme Atma' which is 'cosmic Consciousness' known as Brahm. Hence, for a wise, enlightened and truly learned man there is no real difference between the Jiva and Brahm. Whatever differences that do appear are superficial and caused by faulty perception and distorted understanding.]

चौ०. कबहुँ कि दुख सब कर हित ताकें । तेहि कि दरिद्र परस मनि जाकें ॥ १ ॥

परद्रोही की होहि निसंका । कामी पुनि कि रहहि अकलंका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kabahuṁ ki dukha saba kara hita tākēṁ. tēhi ki daridra parasa mani jākēṁ. 1. paradrōhī kī hōhiṁ nisaṅkā. kāmī puni ki rahahiṁ akalaṅkā. 2.

{Kaagbhusund's mind kept wondering and pondering over a wide range of subjects. A reading of these verses would highlight some of the fundamental principles that one should keep in mind to live a happier and fruitful life. They guide the reader as how to act wisely and be practical in one's day-to-day interaction with the world.}

Can there ever be sorrows and sufferings for a person who does good of all and selflessly does things that are for the welfare of others?

[To wit, such a person would generate so much goodwill with people that everyone would be willing to help him in times of his need. So he never has to suffer problems associated with the world and its people.]

Can anyone suffer from poverty and wants if that person possesses a gem called Parasmani (the philosopher's stone)? [The "parasa mani" is able to turn base metals into gold. So a person who has this rare gem can never suffer from poverty.] (1)

Can a person who keeps enmity with others and has a malevolent nature ever feel fearless; can he live a happy life free from mental anxiety? [To wit, such a person would be surrounded by enemies, and not friends. He would never be sure when he would be attacked or betrayed by others.]

Can a person who is overcome with Kaam (lust, passion and desires) ever remain free from taints and infamy? [To wit, a person who cannot control his sensual

urges is bound to do something nasty that would bring a lot of shame and ignominy to him.]

बंस कि रह द्विज अनहित कीन्हें । कर्म कि होहिं स्वरूपहि चीन्हें ॥ ३ ॥
काहू सुमति कि खल सँग जामी । सुभ गति पाव कि परत्रिय गामी ॥ ४ ॥

bansa ki raha dvija anahita kīnhēm. karma ki hōhiṁ svarūpahi cīnhēm. 3.
kāhū sumati ki khala saṁga jāmi. subha gati pāva ki paratriya gāmi. 4.

Can anyone's descendents (i.e. one's clan and family) survive by persecuting and harming the Brahmins¹? [The Brahmins are the elderly and learned class of people in the society. They deserve respect just like one would respect one's teacher, parents and elders of the family. A society in which elders are shown disrespect and not taken proper care of would disintegrate sooner or later. Its members go out of control and become undisciplined. So the future is doomed for them.]

If one realises or becomes aware of one's true identity, would he ever indulge in worldly activities of a gross nature and allow himself to get entangled in the web of attachments and expectations of rewards for deeds done in this material world? [When one becomes self-realised one knows that his true 'self' is his Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and separate from his physical body. It is the body that does any deed in this world; it is the body that enjoys or suffers as a result of these deeds. If a person becomes wise and enlightened enough to realise that his true self is the Atma then he would remain indifferent to what the body does in this world; he would remain unaffected by either the good effects or the bad effects of such deeds. Neither would the attraction of rewards make him doing anything, nor would the fear of sufferings prevent him from doing his assigned duties. He develops a sense of equanimity, detachment and dispassion towards the deeds that are done by his 'body', which however is not his 'true self', though the external world thinks that these deeds are done by 'him'.] (3)

Can anyone develop wisdom, good thinking and noble characters if one keeps the company of wild, vile, wicked and unscrupulous people? [The adage that one is known by the company one keeps is proved here. A person is certainly and surely affected by the environment in which he lives. If one keeps bad company, one would become bad himself.]

Can an adulterous person who eyes the women of others ever expect to have a happy fate for himself? [Obviously he would be caught and doomed forever. Adultery, lasciviousness and promiscuity are one of the most contemptible qualities one can ever have.] (4)

[Note—¹In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 5 that precede Doha no. 165; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5, 8 that precede Doha no. 166; (iii) Doha no. 174; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 175; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (v) Chaupai line nos 3-4 that precede Doha no. 126; (c) Kishkindha Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 17.]

भव कि परहिं परमात्मा बिंदक । सुखी कि होहिं कबहुँ हरिनिंदक ॥ ५ ॥
 राजु कि रहइ नीति बिनु जानें । अघ कि रहहिं हरिचरित बखानें ॥ ६ ॥

bhava ki parahim paramātmā bindaka. sukhī ki hōhim kabahum̃ harinindaka.

5.

rāju ki raha'i nīti binu jānēm. agha ki rahahim haricarita bakhānēm. 6.

Can someone who is aware of the existence of the Parmatma (the Supreme Atma; the Brahm) ever fall in the grip of the cycle of birth and death?

[To wit, wise and enlightened souls who have realised the ultimate Truth of existence, those who have experienced the profound sense of bliss and blessedness which comes when they have realised the existence of Brahm, or have become 'Brahm-realised', would never find any charm in this world. So they would become detached from it; all their desires pertaining to this gross material world of cease. As a result, when they die, or when their Atma leaves their gross physical body, they would not desire to come back to this world to enjoy it because they know that this enjoyment is false and it is accompanied by countless sufferings. On the contrary, they but would rather wish to become one with Brahm so that they can find an eternal source of happiness, bliss and peace. This means that Brahm-realised souls do not enter into the cycle of birth and death.]

In the same vein, can a person who criticises Lord Hari, who represents one of the many cosmic forms of Brahm, the Parmatma and the Supreme Being, ever expect to be happy and contented? [Kaagbhusund had made this same mistake in his early life for which he had ultimately to suffer the wrath of Lord Shiva. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 105—to Doha no. 109.] (5)

Can a kingdom survive if its king does not know the various laws of good governance, the laws of probity and propriety, the laws of polity and public affairs, and other such laws and principles that a king ought to know? [The kingdom would be ruined and its subjects suffer if the king does not follow the principles of good governance. A similar idea is expressed when Kaagbhusund describes the characters of Kaliyug in Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 101.]

Can sins and their ill effects survive if one narrates the sacred stories associated with Lord Hari that extol the Lord's holy nature and divinity. [This is why true saints and holy souls constantly sing and hear the divine stories of Lord Ram. The sub-conscious mind is very sensitive and receptive, and it is directly affected by whatever a person does or thinks during his waking phase of life. His actions and thoughts during his conscious life affects his inner self in a very definite but imperceptible manner. This is an extension of the principle of one becoming the same as the company one keeps. If an individual allows himself to hear rubbish things, his sub-conscious mind would pick up that rubble and mould his character negatively. On the other hand, if he hears noble things then his sub-conscious mind would subtly influence his inner-self to become noble by nature. Thus, when one sings and hears things that are spiritual by nature, he too becomes spiritually inclined. To wit, by narrating and hearing the stories of Lord Hari a person is able to fill his mind with good thoughts and his heart with good emotions such as that of devotion and affection

for the Lord. By and by, the tainting effects of sins and vices would gradually be replaced with auspicious virtues.] (6)

पावन जस कि पुन्य बिनु होई । बिनु अघ अजस कि पावड़ कोई ॥ ७ ॥

लाभु कि किछु हरि भगति समाना । जेहि गावहिं श्रुति संत पुराना ॥ ८ ॥

pāvana jasa ki pun'ya binu hō'ī. binu agha ajasa ki pāva'i kō'ī. 7.

lābhu ki kichu hari bhagati samānā. jēhi gāvahim śruti santa purānā. 8.

Is it ever possible to get good fame without doing any meritorious deeds? [To wit, if a person does good deeds and takes noble actions, then his fame would spread even without his wanting to do so. Good name and acclaim would come to him voluntarily.]

In a similar way, can one get infamy and bad name without doing anything evil, wrong, unscrupulous and unrighteous? [If one is careful in all his actions and ensures that he does not do anything that is not right, surely ill-fame and ignominy would not come to him. This principle is an extension of what has been said in the first part of this verse—about one getting good fame by doing meritorious deeds.] (7)

Is there any other worthy gain comparable to having Bhakti (devotion, faith and affection) for Lord Hari, a virtue the glory and importance of which has been lauded and extolled by the Vedas, the Saints and the Purans¹. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, there is no other better spiritual deed than to have devotion, faith and affection for Lord God. The glories and importance of “Bhakti” have been described in numerous places in Ram Charit Manas. Even Lord Ram has himself affirmed its importance and espoused its usefulness for the spiritual welfare of a creature.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 45 where Lord Ram has taught the citizens of Ayodhya about the importance of Bhakti; (b) Aranya Kand, (i), from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36 where the Lord has told Sabari about Bhakti and its nine forms; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 43 where the Lord has advised sage Narad about Bhakti.] (8)

हानि कि जग एहि सम किछु भाई । भजिअ न रामहि नर तनु पाई ॥ ९ ॥

अघ कि पिसुनता सम कछु आना । धर्म कि दया सरिस हरिजाना ॥ १० ॥

hāni ki jaga ēhi sama kichu bhā'ī. bhaji'a na rāmahi nara tanu pā'ī. 9.

agha ki pisunatā sama kachu ānā. dharma ki dayā sarisa harijānā. 10.

Oh Brother (bhā'ī)! Is there anything more useless and a greater loss for a person if one does not worship Lord Ram even after getting the body of (i.e. born as) a human being¹? (9)

Is there any other graver misdeed than backbiting? And oh the devotee and mount of Lord Hari (“harijānā”—i.e. Garud), is there any better and meritorious act than

showing mercy and compassion? [To wit, these two are the worst and the best act for a creature to do. The worst thing is backbiting, or criticising a person or tattling about him behind his back when he cannot even defend himself. And the best act for a person is to show understanding, mercy and compassion for his offenders and adversaries.] (10)

[Note—¹The human body is got by the creature's soul after roaming in countless other wombs during the course of its journey through this world. It marks the culmination of a creature's efforts to rise higher and higher in his pursuit to attain the best form of existence for him Atma. The human body is even rare for the gods to acquire, and it is a tool by which a wise person can break free from the cycle of birth and death. At the same time, the human body is also a medium by which the soul can land in grievous trouble if it is not careful to use it judiciously. The best way to employ this body so that it becomes helpful for the creature in his pursuit for deliverance from all sufferings and liberation from the bondage of birth and death is to use it for worshipping and serving Lord Ram.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44 where Lord Ram has himself endorsed this principle.]

एहि बिधि अमिति जुगुति मन गुनऊँ । मुनि उपदेस न सादर सुनऊँ ॥ ११ ॥
पुनि पुनि सगुन पच्छ मैं रोपा । तब मुनि बोलेउ बचन सकोपा ॥ १२ ॥

ēhi bidhi amiti juguti mana guna'ūṁ. muni upadēsa na sādara suna'ūṁ. 11.
puni puni saguna paccha mair̥ rōpā. taba muni bōlē'u bacana sakōpā. 12.

In this way I engaged my mind in various thoughts and pondered over so many subjects as a result of which I did not pay attention to the teachings of the sage (Lomus). [Since my mind was occupied elsewhere, I sat lost in my own thoughts and did not heed what sage Lomus was trying to teach me.] (11)

I repeatedly stressed on the importance of Saguna form of worship as my preferred spiritual quest. When I persisted adamantly, the sage finally lost his cool, becoming extremely peeved and exasperated at my impertinence. He said angrily --- (12)

मूढ़ परम सिख देऊँ न मानसि । उत्तर प्रतिउत्तर बहु आनसि ॥ १३ ॥
सत्य बचन बिस्वास न करही । बायस इव सबही ते डरही ॥ १४ ॥

mūr̥ha parama sikha dē'um̃ na mānasi. uttara prati'uttara bahu ānasi. 13.
satya bacana bisvāsa na karahī. bāyasa iva sabahī tē ḍarahī. 14.

“Oh you stupid fool (mūr̥ha)! I am trying to give you the best of spiritual wisdom but still you don't pay attention to it. Instead, you keep on arguing and citing useless logics just to counter me. (13)

You do not believe in true knowledge and following the path of Truth; you have no faith in my sincere advice. Crowing like a lowly crow, you are fidgety and afraid of everything.

[Like a crow that keeps on crowing and hopping continuously from place to place, not keeping sufficiently still to be able to focus on any given task, you too keep on harping on what you think is correct, without listening to what I am trying to teach you. Again, like a crow you keep changing your position by unnecessarily presenting one argument after another in support of what you deem is the correct path, trying to distract me from my line of thought. You are sore affright to face the reality that you are incompetent and ineligible to get initiation from me on the path of spiritualism and Brahm-realisation, so you are trying to deflect me by presenting irrational arguments just for the sake of arguing and counter me. Oh you stupid fellow; don't you realise that you are committing a grave error.] (14)

सठ स्वपच्छ तव हृदयँ बिसाला । सपदि होहि पच्छी चंडाला ॥ १५ ॥
लीन्ह श्राप मैं सीस चढ़ाई । नहिं कछु भय न दीनता आई ॥ १६ ॥

saṭha svapaccha tava hrdayam̐ bisālā. Sapadi hōhi pacchī caṇḍālā. 15.
līnha śrāpa mair̐ sīsa caṛhā'ī. Nahim̐ kachu bhaya na dīnatā ā'ī. 16.

Oh you wicked and dumb-witted fellow (saṭha)! Your heart is so stubborn that it would accept only that which you think is right (without being open to hear what is said by the other person). It is so inflated with pride that it thinks that what you say is the only correct thing.

Hence, you would soon become a bird which is as wicked as you are. [To wit, you should become a 'crow' because your behaviour resembles this bird.]” (15)

I patiently and gladly accepted this curse of the sage by bowing my head. It caused no fear, worry or depression in me.

[I had already experienced curses. Earlier too I had been cursed by Lord Shiva. But I was sure no harm would come to me this time as now I was taking the side of worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram as opposed to the previous time when I was opposed to Lord Ram when Lord Shiva had cursed me.

Besides this, I also knew that no harm would come to me as Lord Shiva had already blessed me with an eternal life of happiness and blessedness that comes with having devotion for Lord Ram. Say, how can misery and happiness co-exist? Surely, sage Lomus is not superior to Lord Shiva, and therefore the sage's curse won't be able to neutralise the blessings of Lord Shiva.] (16)

दो०। तुरत भयउँ मैं काग तब पुनि मुनि पद सिरु नाइ ।
सुमिरि राम रघुबंस मनि हरषित चलेउँ उड़ाइ ॥ ११२ (क) ॥
dōhā.

turata bhaya'um̐ mair̐ kāga taba puni muni pada siru nā'i.
sumiri rāma raghubansa mani haraṣita calē'um̐ urā'i. 112 (a).

I became a crow immediately (when the sage cursed me)¹. I then bowed my head at the feet of the sage, and invoking Lord Ram who is the exalted Lord of Raghu line of kings of Ayodhya, I cheerfully flew away with a delighted heart² (in my new form as a ‘crow’). (Doha no. 112-a)

[Note—¹This is the second time the poor Kaagbhusund has been cursed for his headstrong nature. The previous occasion was when Lord Shiva had cursed him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 107. The only difference is that on that occasion it was Lord Shiva who had cursed him, and this occasion it is his Guru sage Lomus who has done so.

²Kaagbhusund has steadfastly taken the side of Saguna form of worship. He had insisted and persisted that the visible form of Brahm as Lord Ram appeals to his heart more than the Lord’s cosmic and invisible form as espoused by sage Lomus. Even Lord Shiva worships this Saguna form of Lord Ram, and it is having devotion for this form that Shiva had blessed Kaagbhusund with in his pervious life.

That is why as soon as he turned into a crow he invoked Lord Ram, and seeking the Lord’s blessings he flew away, sure that the Lord would take full care of him and his destiny. That is also why he had no worry or fear in his heart.]

उमा जे राम चरन रत बिगत काम मद क्रोध ।

निज प्रभुमय देखहिं जगत केहि सन करहिं बिरोध ॥ ११२ (ख) ॥

umā jē rāma carana rata bigata kāma mada krōdha.

nija prabhumaya dēkhahim jagata kēhi sana karahim birōdha. 112 (b).

[Lord Shiva, who has been narrating this story of the conversation between the crow-saint Kaagbhusund and Garud to his consort Uma, said to her by way of explaining why Kaagbhusund did not feel angry at sage Lomus for cursing him just because he wanted the sage to enlighten him about the process of worshipping the Saguna form of the Supreme Being, something that was not so grave as to invite the punishment of being cursed to become a crow—] “Oh Uma; listen. Those who have affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram, those who are free from the taints of Kaam (passions and desires), Mada (ego and pride) and Krodha (anger, wrath, fury)—such souls see the whole world as a manifestation of their beloved Lord (Sri Ram), they perceive their beloved Lord everywhere and in all forms in this world. This being the case, say then why and how can they have ill-will or animosity with anyone?”¹. (Doha no. 112-b)

[Note—¹Here we see that Lord Shiva has endorsed Kaagbhusund’s views. Lord Shiva felt glad at heart that Kaagbhusund has adhered steadfastly to the spiritual principles he (Shiva) had advised him—viz. that the best reward a creature can ever get for all his spiritual endeavours is to have devotion for Lord Ram.

Another significant point to note is that a devotee of Lord Ram, here symbolised by Kaagbhusund, is put on a high spiritual pedestal as compared to the so-called “Gyanis” represented by sage Lomus. The “Gyani” is a person who is Brahm-realised and self-realised, who possesses great metaphysical knowledge about the true nature of the self and the Atma, about the existence of the pure Consciousness at two

levels of existence, viz. the macrocosmic and the microcosmic levels, what is true freedom, and other such matters related to esoteric subjects pertaining to spiritualism and theology. All these spiritual paths are extremely complex and besotted with difficulties as compared to the simple and straightforward path of devotion for Lord God.]

चौ०. सुनु खगेस नहिं कछु रिषि दूषन । उर प्रेरक रघुबंस बिभूषन ॥ १ ॥
कृपासिंधु मुनि मति करि भोरी । लीन्ही प्रेम परिच्छा मोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu khagēsa nahim kachu riṣi dūṣana. ura prēraḱa raghubansa bibhūṣana. 1.
kṛpāsindhu muni mati kari bhōrī. līnhī prēma paricchā mōrī. 2.

{After narrating how and why he became a ‘crow’ by birth, Kaagbhusund continued with his narration as Garud listened attentively. Kaagbhusund told him—}

‘Listen oh the King of Birds (sunu khagēsa)! The sage (Lomus) was not at fault in this episode (of his cursing me). For in all sooth, it is Lord Ram, the most glorious Lord of Raghu’s line of kings, who inspires or prompts the heart of all living beings and motivates them to do and act in the way the Lord wants. (1)

Verily indeed, the most merciful Lord had tested my devotion for him by clouding the mind of the sage and obstructing his power of reasoning.

[That is why the learned sage was stuck on one line of argument, espousing only the cause of Nirguna form of worship, instead being open-minded and accepting my submission that this form of worship did not appeal to me, and therefore he devising a way to explain to me the Saguna form of worship which I was able to understand and ready to follow. Actually, Lord Ram wished to see if I was really steady in my pursuit of Bhakti or devotion for the Lord. So he prompted the Mana, or heart and mind of the sage, to stubbornly advocate that path which was just the opposite of Bhakti.] (2)

मन बच क्रम मोहि निज जन जाना । मुनि मति पुनि फेरी भगवाना ॥ ३ ॥
रिषि मम महत सीलता देखी । राम चरन बिस्वास बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥

mana baca krama mōhi nija jana jānā. muni mati puni phērī bhagavānā. 3.
riṣi mama mahata sīlatā dēkhī. rāma carana bisvāsa bisēṣī. 4.

When the Lord (Sri Ram) had become sure that I had unflinching faith in him and was his ardent devotee and follower by my Mana (mind and heart), my Bachan (spoken words) and my Karma (deeds and actions), the Lord removed the cloud of delusions that had prompted the sage to be wrathful upon me and curse me. Hence, the sage had a sudden change of heart as he realised his error and regretted his actions. (3)

The exalted sage quietly reflected upon my excellent qualities befitting of a great soul (such as being pious and humble, one who lacked ego and pride, one who does not

become angry, one who is steadfast on his chosen spiritual path, and so on), as well as my steady affection, love and faith in the holy feet of Lord Ram. (4)

अति बिसमय पुनि पुनि पछिताई । सादर मुनि मोहि लीन्ह बोलाई ॥ ५ ॥
मम परितोष बिबिधि बिधि कीन्हा । हरषित राममंत्र तब दीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥

ati bisamaya puni puni pachitā'ī. sādara muni mōhi līnha bōlā'ī. 5.
mama paritōṣa bibidhi bidhi kīnhā. haraṣita rāmamantra taba dīnhā. 6.

Then the sage was overwhelmed with regret and become remorseful at his own actions that did not behove of a great sage of his stature. So, lamenting repeatedly and gravely at his own behaviour, he immediately called me back¹. (5)

He repeatedly assuaged my feelings and reassured me affectionately. Thence, he delightfully gave me the Mantra of Lord Ram². (6)

[Note—¹The learned sage felt ashamed of himself. He immensely regretted his actions and behaviour. He realised that the way he got angry at me did not suit him at all, and it contrasted sharply with my calmness and lack of anger when he had cursed me. He realised that his action of getting angry at me and cursing me amounted to a great sin as he had cursed a devotee of Lord Ram whose only fault was that he had wished to learn how to worship and have devotion for Lord Ram's Saguna form (i.e. the form that the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm takes in this world) that has been lauded by the scriptures. Even if the devotee did not take offence and forgave him, the Lord however would not tolerate it and is sure to punish the sage if he did not immediately take remedial steps.

So, as soon as the heat of his passions subsided and he realised the gravity of his error, and when I was still not far away, the sage lamented gravely and immediately called me back to console me.

²After expressing his regrets and assuring me that no actual harm would come to me, he fulfilled my wish by telling me how to worship Lord Ram and meditate upon the Lord by using his divine Mantra. By thus initiating me, he became my 'Guru'. He also explained to me why he had become annoyed at my behaviour in the first place, saying that since there was no difference between the Nirguna and Saguna form of the Supreme Being, he was peeved when I tried to override him and insist on the supremacy of the Saguna form of the Lord. It is not good to confront one's teacher and try to prove him wrong.

But I need not worry about my becoming a 'crow' as this was the wish of the Lord. Since the Lord is very merciful towards his devotees, surely this form of a crow is for my own good and it would give me an exalted stature in the hierarchy of saints and sages.

Another very significant point to note here is this: The wise and enlightened sage who had taken the side of the all-pervading, invisible and cosmic form of Brahm known as the 'Nirguna Brahm' that is very esoteric and beyond comprehension, had to surrender at last in favour of an ordinary soul who was taking the side of the embodied form of Brahm known as the 'Saguna Brahm' that is visible, and easy to access and understand.

To wit, the emphasis here is on the importance of Bhakti or devotion for the embodied form of the Supreme Being as a better and easier spiritual path for attaining liberation and deliverance as compared to the more abstract and esoteric path of Gyan that relies heavily on acquisition of knowledge of the Atma and the Consciousness.]

बालकरूप राम कर ध्याना । कहेउ मोहि मुनि कृपानिधाना ॥ ७ ॥
सुंदर सुखद मोहि अति भावा । सो प्रथमहिं मैं तुम्हहि सुनावा ॥ ८ ॥

bālakarūpa rāma kara dhyānā. kahē'u mōhi muni kṛpānidhānā. 7.
sundara sukhada mōhi ati bhāvā. sō prathamahim maim tumhahi sunāvā. 8.

The sage advised me how to meditate upon the 'child form' of Lord Ram. (7)

This advice was well received by me as this form of the Lord was beautiful, and it provided immense joy, happiness and bliss to the beholder. It pleased me greatly and I felt fulfilled. I have already told you (Garud) about it¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 77.]

मुनि मोहि कछुक काल तहँ राखा । रामचरितमानस तब भाषा ॥ ९ ॥
सादर मोहि यह कथा सुनाई । पुनि बोले मुनि गिरा सुहाई ॥ १० ॥

muni mōhi kachuka kāla taham' rākhā. rāmacaritamānasa taba bhāṣā. 9.
sādara mōhi yaha kathā sunāī. puni bōlē muni girā suhāī. 10.

The sage kept me there with him for sometime and narrated the divine, sacred and holy story of Lord Ram, known as 'Ram Charit Manas', to me¹. (9)

After narrating the whole story to me, the sage once again spoke to me most affectionately as follows --- (10)

[Note—¹This is the second time Kaagbhusund has heard this story of the Ram Charit Manas. Earlier he had heard it from Lord Shiva—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30. Kaagbhusund had heard this story from Lord Shiva in his Spirit form while the Lord was narrating it his consort Parvati, whereas it is in his physical gross form as a crow that he has heard it from sage Lomus now for the second time.]

रामचरित सर गुप्त सुहावा । संभु प्रसाद तात मैं पावा ॥ ११ ॥
तोहि निज भगत राम कर जानी । ताते मैं सब कहेउँ बखानी ॥ १२ ॥

rāmacarita sara gupta suhāvā. sambhu prasāda tāta mair̥m pāvā. 11.
tōhi nija bhagata rāma kara jānī. tātē mair̥m saba kahē'um¹ bakhānī. 12.

“This divine lake of spiritual nectar (known as Ram Charit Manas) is very pleasant and sweet but difficult to access as it is quite secret and sublime in nature. Dear (tāta), I received it as a grace of Lord Shiva. (11)

Realising that you are a dear devotee of Lord Ram, I decided to narrate the whole of the story to you. (12)

राम भगति जिन्ह कें उर नाही । कबहुं न तात कहिअ तिन्ह पाहीं ॥ १३ ॥
मुनि मोहि बिबिधि भाँति समुझावा । मैं सप्रेम मुनि पद सिरु नावा ॥ १४ ॥

rāma bhagati jinha kēm̐ ura nāhīm̐. kabahum̐ na tāta kahi'a tinha pāhīm̐. 13.
muni mōhi bibidhi bhām̐ti samujhāvā. mair̥m saprēma muni pada siru nāvā. 14.

Those who do not have devotion for Lord Ram in their mind and heart, oh dear (tāta), one should never narrate this sacred story before them (or to them). [The reason is that they will mock at it, ridicule it, and insult it.]” (13)

In this way, the sage explained the things to me in different ways. And then I reverentially bowed my head at his feet. (14)

निज कर कमल परसि मम सीसा । हरषित आसिष दीन्ह मुनीसा ॥ १५ ॥
राम भगति अबिरल उर तोरें । बसिहि सदा प्रसाद अब मोरें ॥ १६ ॥

nija kara kamala parasi mama sīsā. haraṣita āsiṣa dīnha munīsā. 15.
rāma bhagati abirala ura tōrēm̐. basihi sadā prasāda aba mōrēm̐. 16.

The exalted sage delightfully put his lotus-like palms on my head as a gesture of affection, and then he blessed me cheerfully (as he felt very contented and happy). (15)

He said, “By my blessing, profound devotion for Lord Ram will henceforth be firmly established in your heart for all times to come¹.” (16)

[Note—¹This is the second time that Kaagbhusund is being blessed in this way. The first time was when Lord Shiva as well as his previous Guru had done so in his earlier life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 109 along with Chaupai line nos. 10-16 that precede it.]

दो०. सदा राम प्रिय होहु तुम्ह सुभ गुन भवन अमान ।
कामरूप इच्छामरन ग्यान बिराग निधान ॥ ११३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

sadā rāma priya hōhu tumha subha guna bhavana amāna.
kāmarūpa icchāmarana gyāna birāga nidhāna. 113 (a).

[Sage Lomus blessed Kaagbhsund as follows—] “You will always be loved by Lord Ram and be dear to him (sadā rāma priya hōhu tumha). You will be an embodiment of all the greatest of auspicious virtues that ensure a creature’s all round welfare (subha guna bhavana). You shall be free from the negative trait of pride, haughtiness and ego (amāna).

You would be able to assume whatever form that you wish (kāmarūpa). Your death will be as per your wish (i.e. you will be able to leave your physical body to assume an ethereal form as and when you wish to do so; death would not come to you without your wish—“icchāmarana”). And you would be a treasury of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment), and Vairagya (the virtues of renunciation, dispassion and detachment from the world and the charms of its sense objects (gyāna birāga nidhāna). (Doha no. 113-a)

जेहिं आश्रम तुम्ह बसब पुनि सुमिरत श्रीभगवंत ।
ब्यापिहि तहँ न अबिद्या जोजन एक प्रजंत ॥ ११३ (ख) ॥

jēhim āśrama tumha basaba puni sumirata śrībhagavanta.
byāpihi taham’na abidyā jōjana ēka prajanta. 113 (b).

Besides the above blessings, I further bless you that the hermitage in which you dwell with your mind and thought focused eternally on the Lord God (here meaning Lord Ram), no sort of ignorance and delusions would ever be able to cast their dark shadow over that place for a radius of one Yojan (roughly eight miles) around it.

[To wit, it would be protected place where you will be free to pursue your spiritual way of life without any interference from the any of the ill effects of life that are inherent in the gross mortal world.] (Doha no. 113-b)

चौ०. काल कर्म गुन दोष सुभाऊ । कछु दुख तुम्हहि न ब्यापिहि काऊ ॥ १ ॥
राम रहस्य ललित बिधि नाना । गुप्त प्रगट इतिहास पुराना ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

kāla karma guna dōṣa subhā’ū. kachu dukha tumhahi na byāpihi kā’ū. 1.
rāma rahasya lalita bidhi nānā. gupta pragaṭa itihāsa purānā. 2.

You would be immune to the effects of Kaal (time, circumstances and death), Karma (deeds and actions), Guna (good, the mediocre and the bad qualities; the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna respectively), the various faults associated with one’s nature and habits, and all other causes of grief, pain, miseries and torments in this world¹. (1)

The myriads of fascinating spiritual secrets related to Lord Ram—those that are well known as well as those that are too mysterious, esoteric and profound to be common knowledge—as narrated and expounded in the different Itihas and Purans (ancient chronicles and mythological histories) explicitly or implicitly --- (2)

[Note—¹A similar blessing was granted to Kaagbhusund by Lord Shiva as well as Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 109 where Lord Shiva has blessed him; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88 where Lord Ram has blessed him.]

बिनु श्रम तुम्ह जानब सब सोऊ । नित नव नेह राम पद होऊ ॥ ३ ॥
जो इच्छा करिहहु मन माहीं । हरि प्रसाद कछु दुर्लभ नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

binu śrama tumha jānaba saba sō'ū. nita nava nēha rāma pada hō'ū. 3.
jō icchā karihahu mana māhīm. hari prasāda kachu durlabha nāhīm. 4.

--- You will know them all without effort. [To wit, the profound secrets associated with Lord Ram would be known to you in a natural way.]¹

You shall have abiding love and affection (devotion) at the holy feet of Lord Ram, and this glorious quality would get enhanced day by day². (3)

Whatever you shall wish in your Mana (mind and heart), every such wish would be fulfilled by the grace of Lord Hari (Lord Ram); nothing would be beyond your reach.” (4)

[Note—¹A similar blessing was granted by Lord Ram to Kaagbhusund. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 84; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 85.

²Lord Shiva has also blessed Kaagbhusund in this way. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 109.]

सुनि मुनि आसिष सुनु मतिधीरा । ब्रह्मगिरा भइ गगन गँभीरा ॥ ५ ॥
एवमस्तु तव बच मुनि ग्यानी । यह मम भगत कर्म मन बानी ॥ ६ ॥

sunī muni āsiṣa sunu matidhīrā. brahmagirā bha'i gagana gaṁbhīrā. 5.
ēvamastu tava baca muni gyānī. yaha mama bhagata karma mana bānī. 6.

Oh the one with a steady mind (“matidhīrā”—a reference to Garud and said to show respect to him)! Listen. Upon hearing the words of blessings of the sage, there was a deep and resounding voice from the sky (from the heaven). (5)

It was the invisible voice of Brahm (the Supreme Being) who endorsed the sage's blessings by saying, “Oh learned and wise sage! Let your words come true. He (Kaagbhusund) is truly me ardent devotee with his Karma (deeds), Mana (mind and heart) and Vachan (spoken words)¹.” (6)

[Note—¹The heavenly voice was that of Brahm, the Supreme Being known as Lord Ram, who endorsed sage Lomus and affirmed that Kaagbhusund was a true devotee of the Lord. Earlier we have read that when Lord Shiva had blessed him, his Guru of previous life too had endorsed the Lord's blessings by saying "so be it". Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 109-a.]

सुनि नभगिरा हरष मोहि भयऊ । प्रेम मगन सब संसय गयऊ ॥ ७ ॥
करि बिनती मुनि आयसु पाई । पद सरोज पुनि पुनि सिरु नाई ॥ ८ ॥

sunī nabhagīrā haraṣa mōhi bhaya'ū. prēma magana saba sansaya gaya'ū. 7.
kari binatī muni āyasu pā'ī. pada sarōja puni puni siru nā'ī. 8.

When I heard the voice from the heaven I felt very happy. I was overwhelmed with the emotions of love and affection (for my dear Lord Ram), and all my doubts and fears (about my destiny) gradually vanished (and I felt reassured of a blissful spiritual life). (7)

Thence, I prayed to the sage, bowed my head repeatedly at his feet, and sought his permission (to leave). (8)

हरष सहित एहिं आश्रम आयउँ । प्रभु प्रसाद दुर्लभ बर पायउँ ॥ ९ ॥
इहाँ बसत मोहि सुनु खग ईसा । बीते कलप सात अरु बीसा ॥ १० ॥

haraṣa sahita ēhiṁ āśrama āya'um'. prabhu prasāda durlabha bara pāya'um'. 9.
ihām' basata mōhi sunu khaga īsā. bītē kalapa sāta aru bīsā. 10.

Then I came to this hermitage most cheerfully and with a delighted heart. Indeed, by the grace of my Lord (Sri Ram), I had been fortunate to be blessed with a boon that was very rare indeed to get. (9)

Oh the Lord of Birds ("khaga īsā"—i.e. Garud)! I have been living in this hermitage for twenty-seven Kalpas (cycles of creation and destruction). (10)

करउँ सदा रघुपति गुन गाना । सादर सुनहिं बिहंग सुजाना ॥ ११ ॥
जब जब अवधपुरीं रघुबीरा । धरहिं भगत हित मनुज सरीरा ॥ १२ ॥

kara'um' sadā raghupati guna gānā. sādara sunahim bihaṅga sujānā. 11.
jaba jaba avadhapurīm raghubīrā. dharahim bhagata hita manuja sarīrā. 12.

While living here I always narrate the divine virtues and sacred glories (stories) of Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) even as birds who are wise and intelligent come to me to hear these narrations.

[To wit, this gives me an opportunity to share the spiritual nectar that I had accessed by the grace of the Lord with other Jivas or living beings. It also helps me to constantly remember Lord Ram and remain submerged in the thoughts of the Lord, which gives an intense sense of bliss and contentedness to my own soul. I feel privileged that the Lord had chosen me to spread his glories by making me narrate stories of the Lord to other creatures.] (11)

Meanwhile, whenever Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the kings descending from Raghu) takes birth as a human being in Ayodhya for the benefit of his devotees and followers --- (12)

तब तब जाइ राम पुर रहऊँ । सिसुलीला बिलोकि सुख लहऊँ ॥ १३ ॥
पुनि उर राखि राम सिसुरूपा । निज आश्रम आवउँ खगभूषा ॥ १४ ॥

taba taba jā'i rāma pura raha'ūm̃. sisulīlā bilōki sukha laha'ūm̃. 13.
puni ura rākhi rāma sisurūpā. nija āśrama āva'um̃ khagabhūpā. 14.

--- On all those occasions I go and stay in the capital city of Lord Ram (i.e. at Ayodhya)¹. There, I witness the Lord's activities as a child, and this gives me immense joy and happiness. (13)

After sometime, I enshrine the Lord's image as a child in my heart and come back to my hermitage (here on Mt. Neel)². (14)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 75.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 89.]

कथा सकल मैं तुम्हहि सुनाई । काग देह जेहिं कारन पाई ॥ १५ ॥
कहिउँ तात सब प्रस्न तुम्हारी । राम भगति महिमा अति भारी ॥ १६ ॥

kathā sakala mair̃ tumhahi sunā'ī. kāga dēha jēhim̃ kārana pā'ī. 15.
kahi'um̃ tāta saba prasna tumhārī. rāma bhagati mahimā ati bhārī. 16.

I have described to you the circumstances due to which I had to become a 'crow'. (15)

Oh Dear (tāta)! I have answered all your queries. Ah! In all sooth and without gainsay, the glory of having devotion for Lord Ram is indeed stupendous and beyond measure¹. (16)

[Note—¹It is this virtue of devotion that acted as a shield for me and provided immunity from the sage's wrath. Instead of being doomed by his curse, I was blessed by him to get eternal bliss, happiness, beatitude and peace. I was blessed to be free from all sorts of worldly torments and miseries. I was blessed to be free from faults

and taints that are inherent in all creatures who take birth. I was granted free access to anywhere I wished to go. I was granted access to even the most secret of knowledge. I was granted control over my destiny. And the icing on the cake was that even Lord Ram had praised me in front of sage Lomus when the heavenly voice said that I was the Lord's faithful devotee, and that the Lord endorses whatever boon the sage had granted me. Say, what more would anyone want!]

दो०. ताते यह तन मोहि प्रिय भयउ राम पद नेह ।

निज प्रभु दरसन पायउँ गए सकल संदेह ॥ ११४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

tātē yaha tana mōhi priya bhaya'u rāma pada nēha.

nija prabhu darasana pāya'um̐ ga'ē sakala sandēha. 114 (a).

The reason why this body of a crow is so dear to me is because I had attained devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram by the medium of it¹. Then, I was fortunate to have a divine sight of the Lord from close quarters in this body², and this experience had removed all my doubts and confusions³. (Doha no. 114-a)

[Note—¹Kaagbhusund had obtained the blessing of sage Lomus that he would have eternal devotion for Lord Ram and all the spiritual secrets of the Lord would be known to him when he had become a 'crow' due to the sage's curse. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 112-a; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 114.

Earlier he was a Brahmin, and prior to that he had assumed countless forms as different types of creatures during his journey through myriad wombs in the cycle of birth and death. But never did he ever find the sort of spiritual contentedness, bliss, joy and happiness as he had got as a crow. That is why he loved this body the most. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 110—when he was born as a Brahmin; (ii) Chaupai line no. that precedes Doha no. 97 when he was born as a Shudra; (iii) Doha no. 109-b and 109-c where he says that first he had become a serpent and then many other creatures due to Lord Shiva's curse; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 110 where he says that he had also become a member of some sub-human species as well as god during the long-haul journey through the cycle of transmigration.

²In his body of a crow, Kaagbhusund had the rarest of rare honour and privilege of staying near Lord Ram and and playing with him when the Lord was an infant. No other living being other than Kaagbhusund has ever had this honour. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Doha no. 77-a.

³Seeing the Lord's human behaviour, Kaagbhusund was greatly perplexed, and doubts and confusions of a variety of sorts overwhelmed his heart and mind. He wondered how it is ever possible that the Supreme Being would behave like an ordinary child. So the Lord showed him is 'Viraat Form', a stupendous form that was exceedingly mysterious, most incomprehensible and beyond imagination, as it was at once very esoteric, astoundingly magical, and of cosmic proportions. Then Kaagbhusund

realised the true nature of Lord Ram, and all his doubts and confusions regarding the Lord's divinity and holiness vanished. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 77-b—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83; and (ii) from Sortha no. 90-b—to Sortha no. 92-b.]

भगति पच्छ हठ करि रहेउँ दीन्हि महारिषि साप ।
मुनि दुर्लभ बर पायउँ देखहु भजन प्रताप ॥ ११४ (ख) ॥

bhagati paccha haṭha kari rahē'um' dīnhi mahāriṣi sāpa.
muni durlabha bara pāya'um' dēkhahu bhajana pratāpa. 114 (b).

I had stubbornly taken the side of Bhakti (devotion for Lord Ram) and adhered to this spiritual path, strongly espousing this cause, for which the great sage (Lomus) had cursed me (to become a crow).

But note this point that at the same time I was blessed with the grant of boons that not even great seers and hermits can have¹. It clearly establishes the spiritual powers and the stupendous glories of the virtue of having devotion for Lord Ram, and the astounding positive effects that worshipping the Lord has for the creature. (Doha no.114-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 113 along with Chaupai line nos. 6, 9 and 16 that precede it—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 114.]

चौ०. जे असि भगति जानि परिहरहीं । केवल ग्यान हेतु श्रम करहीं ॥ १ ॥
ते जड़ कामधेनु गृहँ त्यागी । खोजत आकु फिरहिं पय लागी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

jē asi bhagati jāni pariharahīm. kēvala gyāna hētu śrama karahīm. 1.
tē jaṛa kāmādhēnu grham' tyāgī. khōjata āku phirahīm paya lāgī. 2.

Those who discard or abandon such a glorious path of Bhakti (devotion for the Lord as a means of spiritual fulfilment and attainment of bliss, peace, happiness and deliverance) inspite of knowing its astounding virtues and stupendous authority and powers, and instead make strenuous efforts to pursue the path of Gyan (acquisition of wisdom and knowledge as elucidated in the scriptures such as the Vedas, the Purans etc.) for their spiritual needs [1]—verily indeed and in all sooth, such people are stupid as they leave the Kaamdhenu cow (the all wish-fulfilling cow) that is present in their own homes and go out searching for milk seeping from the stem of the Aak plant (the milk-weed; the swallow-wart plant) [2].¹ (1-2)

[Note—¹If one can attain one's objective by an easy and simple method, there is no sense and wisdom in undergoing hardships and suffering for attaining it by other more complicated and difficult means. Bhakti is a simple method to attain spiritual blessedness so much so that even those who are illiterates can attain joy, happiness, bliss and freedom from the chain of birth and death by following the path of devotion

and love for Lord God. Hence, what sense is there in following the difficult and strenuous path of ‘Gyan’ which requires high mental abilities, a lot of effort and observance of so many vows and religious practices entailing diligence and sufferance that it becomes almost impossible to adhere to it faithfully and to achieve success through it.

The superiority of Bhakti over Gyan has been endorsed by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 46.

Kaagbhusund has also elaborated on this principle of Bhakti being better than Gyan in one’s spiritual quest in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Doha no. 120.]

सुनु खगेस हरि भगति बिहाई । जे सुख चाहिं आन उपाई ॥ ३ ॥
ते सठ महासिंधु बिनु तरनी । पैरि पार चाहिं जड़ करनी ॥ ४ ॥

sunu khagēsa hari bhagati bihā’ī. jē sukha cāhahim āna upā’ī. 3.
tē saṭha mahāsindhu binu taranī. pairi pāra cāhahim jaṛa karanī. 4.

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa)! Listen. Those who desire to have happiness, peace, solace and succour, those who wish to feel blessed and contented, those who want freedom from worldly miseries and torments, those who are desirous of attaining liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death—if they abandon or discard the path of Bhakti¹ and seek these blessings by following any other means, then they are exceedingly stupid and unfortunate ones. (3)

Such duds wish to cross a huge ocean by swimming across it instead of boarding a ship that is reliable and sturdy.

[To wit, just as it is impossible to cross a huge ocean by swimming across it, so it also impossible to cross the world of transmigration without the help of Bhakti for Lord Ram. ‘Bhakti’ here refers to the glorious virtues of devotion, worship, faith, affection, commitment, reverence, submission and selfless service for Lord Ram.]² (4)

[Note—¹Refer to following verses for more on the concept of ‘Bhakti’: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 85; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 95; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 119; (v) Chaupai line nos. 7-19 that precede Doha no. 122.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 15-19 that precede it where the same idea is explicitly reiterated.]

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PART—4

[Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 115—to Doha no. 120.]

सुनि भसुंडि के बचन भवानी । बोलेउ गरुड़ हरषि मृदु बानी ॥ ५ ॥
तव प्रसाद प्रभु मम उर माहीं । संसय सोक मोह भ्रम नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

sunī bhasuṇḍī kē bacana bhavānī. bōlē'u garuṛa haraṣi mṛdu bānī. 5.
tava prasāda prabhu mama ura māhīm. sansaya sōka mōha bhrama nāhīm. 6.

{Lord Shiva, who was narrating the conversation between Kaagbhusund and Garud to his consort Parvati, who was also known as 'Bhavani' as she was the consort of 'Bhava', one of the many names of Shiva, continued with his narration as follows—}

'Oh Bhavani! When Garud heard what Kaagbhusund had told him, he was exhilarated. He once again spoke sweetly to Kaagbhusund, praising him and telling him that his discourse has removed all sorts of doubts and delusions from his heart and mind. (5)

Garud courteously said to Kaagbhusund, "Oh Lord (prabhu)! By your grace, no doubt, sorrow, delusion and confusion remain in my heart¹. (6)

[Note—¹To wit, now I know the reality and truth of Lord Ram. Previously I was confounded by the Lord's behaviour which was like that of an ordinary human being. Even you were similarly confused when you saw Lord Ram playing like an ordinary human child. But then Lord Ram had shown you his 'Viraat Form' that was the all-encompassing and all-pervading cosmic form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Now having heard it directly from you who are a witness to it, I am convinced.

I am so fortunate to have come to someone who was as confused about the Lord's authenticity and divinity as I was. I thank Lord Shiva to have sent me to you. It is very convincing and reassuring to hear about the Lord's truth and reality, about his divinity and holiness, about Lord Ram being the Supreme Being himself in a human form due to certain circumstances, from someone who is a first-hand eye-witness to the events that prove it. For this, I am full of gratitude towards you.]

सुनेउँ पुनीत राम गुन ग्रामा । तुम्हरी कृपाँ लहेउँ बिश्रामा ॥ ७ ॥
एक बात प्रभु पूँछउँ तोही । कहहु बुझाइ कृपानिधि मोही ॥ ८ ॥

sunē'um' punīta rāma guna grāmā. tumharī kṛpām' lahē'um' bīśrāmā. 7.
ēka bāta prabhu pūm'cha'um' tōhī. kahahu bujhā'i kṛpānidhi mōhī. 8.

By your kindness and grace, I was able to hear the magnificent glories and the divine stories of Lord Ram which bestowed immense contentedness and peace to me. (7)

Oh Lord (prabhu)! Now, I shall enquire about one more thing from you. Oh an embodiment of kindness and mercy (krpānidhi)! Please be gracious enough to explain it to me. (8)

कहहिं संत मुनि बेद पुराना । नहिं कछु दुर्लभ ग्यान समाना ॥ ९ ॥
सोइ मुनि तुम्ह सन कहेउ गोसाई । नहिं आदरेहु भगति की नाई ॥ १० ॥

kahahim santa muni bēda purānā. nahim kachu durlabha gyāna samānā. 9.
sō'i muni tumha sana kahē'u gōsā'īm. nahim ādarēhu bhagati kī nā'īm. 10.

Saints, sages, the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans—all are of an unanimous view that there is nothing like the virtue of 'Gyan' (metaphysical knowledge, wisdom, self-realisation, enlightenment, acquisition of true awareness and knowledge pertaining to the Atma, the soul and the pure consciousness, and other such esoteric matters related to spiritualism). (9)

Oh my Lord (gōsā'īm)! That same eclectic virtue of 'Gyan' was being preached to you by the sage (Lomus). But you did not show it as much respect as you had shown to 'Bhakti'; you did not prefer Gyan over Bhakti¹. [And the thing went out of control to such an extent that the sage had even cursed you. Yet, you did not feel regret, but mysteriously it was the sage who felt remorseful for his anger at you, and lamented gravely for it. Then he had profusely blessed you with boons that are rare to get. I am awed by these events. I wonder what special is there in Bhakti that you had preferred it and which led you to attain immortality and blessedness inspite of being cursed. So I wish to learn more about the spiritual importance and the significance of Bhakti.] (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 110-b—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 114.]

ग्यानहि भगतिहि अंतर केता । सकल कहहु प्रभु कृपा निकेता ॥ ११ ॥
सुनि उरगारि बचन सुख माना । सादर बोलेउ काग सुजाना ॥ १२ ॥

gyānahi bhagatihi antara kētā. sakala kahahu prabhu krpā nikētā. 11.
suni uragāri bacana sukha mānā. sādara bōlē'u kāga sujānā. 12.

Oh an abode of mercy and compassion (krpā nikētā)! What is the difference between Gyan and Bhakti? Please tell me all about it.' (11)

Hearing the polite words of Garud (the enemy of serpents—"uragāri"), the sagacious and erudite crow (Kaagbhusund) said (i.e. began to explain the difference between Gyan and Bhakti) as follows --- (12)

भगतिहि ग्यानहि नहिं कछु भेदा । उभय हरहिं भव संभव खेदा ॥ १३ ॥
नाथ मुनीस कहहिं कछु अंतर । सावधान सोउ सुनु बिहंगबर ॥ १४ ॥

bhagatihi gyānahi nahim kachu bhēdā. ubhaya harahim bhava sambhava
khēdā. 13.

nātha munīsa kahahim kachu antara. sāvadhāna sō'u sunu bihaṅgabara. 14.

‘There is no difference whatsoever between Gyan and Bhakti. Both of them have to powers to eliminate the countless miseries, sufferings and torments having their origin in this mortal gross world of transmigration. [There is no difference between them, both of them are equally potent and efficacious in eliminating the horrors and torments of birth and death.] (13)

However, great learned sages and seers have pointed out some subtle differences between the two. Oh the most exalted amongst the birds (“bihaṅgabara”—i.e. Garud)! Listen carefully as I enumerate them for you. (14)

ग्यान बिराग जोग बिग्याना । ए सब पुरुष सुनहु हरिजाना ॥ १५ ॥
पुरुष प्रताप प्रबल सब भाँती । अबला अबल सहज जड़ जाती ॥ १६ ॥

gyāna birāga jōga bigyānā. ē saba puruṣa sunahu harijānā. 15.

puruṣa pratāpa prabala saba bhāmṭī. abalā abala sahaja jara jāṭī. 16.

Oh the devotee of Lord Hari and his mount (“harijānā”—Garud)! Gyan (metaphysics; gnosis; wisdom and knowledge of the Atma or pure consciousness as being the creature’s true self), Vairagya (renunciation, detachment, dispassion), Yoga (meditation and contemplation leading to oneness with the Supreme Being) and Vigyan (deep and analytical knowledge pertaining to existence and the truth behind it)—all of them are conceived as ‘masculine forces’¹. (15)

A man’s strength, ability and powers are astounding, and he can do wonderful things and achieve stupendous success if he is so determined. On the other hand, a ‘female’ (here referring to ‘Maya’ or delusions) is regarded as being naturally weak in strength and physical powers as well as dull when compared to her male counterpart (which is ‘Gyan’ here)². (16)

[Note—¹These virtues and qualities are dynamic spiritual forces of seminal potentials. They are very powerful and effective tools by which one can achieve whatever one wishes. Those who practice them consider themselves wise, potent, powerful and able. They think that they are ‘manly’ because they are making efforts to achieve what they want; they are sure that they can attain their objectives by relying on these methods as these methods are very effective and powerful. Any hindrance in this path annoys them and invites their wrath. At the same time, if they fail to achieve success by following these paths, they feel impotent and depressed as if everything has been lost for them much like a ‘man’ who cannot do what he wants to do.

²Just like the case of a domineering male who can subdue a female, Gyan can help its practitioners to vanquish Maya or delusions. So those who adopt the path of Gyan are easily able to overcome the negative effects of worldly delusions.]

दो०. पुरुष त्यागि सक नारिहि जो बिरक्त मति धीर ।

न तु कामी बिषयाबस बिमुख जो पद रघुबीर ॥ ११५ (क) ॥

dōhā.

puruṣa tyāgi saka nārihi jō birakta mati dhīra.

na tu kāmī biṣayābasa bimukha jō pada raghubīra. 115 (a).

If a man has a steady mind which has renounced lust and passions, if he is not a slave to his sensual urges, then he can very easily turn away from even the most voluptuous woman.

On the other hand, those who have turned away from the holy feet of Lord Raghubir (Sri Ram) are the ones who will find it difficult to control themselves and are easy prey to lust and passions.

[To wit, those who have devotion for Lord Ram develop detachment from sensual pleasures as they find no charm in it. They find devotion to be an extremely better tool and a sustainable source for deriving pleasure and comfort for their souls. They realise that sensual pleasures are transient and result in grief at the end. So they do not fall in this trap no matter how strong is the temptation.]¹ (Doha no. 115-a)

[Note—¹Gyan, Vairagya, Yoga and Vigyan—these are all masculine in nature and regarded as the muscular male who has strength and powers, but who can be easily corrupted. A man is physically stronger and more powerful as compared to his female counterpart, and this is right from their birth as a natural phenomenon. Only a man who is resolute and firm in his mind can remain unattached and forsake being lured by the deluding and entrapping charms of a woman, and not the one who is lascivious and passionate and has turned away from the holy feet of Lord Ram.]

सो०. सोउ मुनि ग्याननिधान मृगनयनी बिधु मुख निरखि ।

बिबस होइ हरिजान नारि बिष्नु माया प्रगट ॥ ११५ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

sō'u muni gyānanidhāna mṛganayanā bidhu mukha nirakhi.

bibasa hō'i harijāna nāri biṣnu māyā pragaṭa. 115 (b).

Even exalted sages who pride themselves as being a living embodiments of wisdom and enlightenment lose their sense of propriety and become ensnared by lustful glances cast by beautiful woman with bewitching fawn-like eyes.

[To wit, they become overcome with passion and desire when a charming lady shows sensual attraction for them and makes lustful gestures at them. They find it hard to resist such sexual advances.]

Oh a devotee of Lord Hari and his mount (harijāna)! It is the Maya (delusion creating powers) of Lord Vishnu which has manifested itself in the form of a female.

[That is why Maya is regarded as a ‘feminine gender’ as I have told you earlier.]¹
(Sortha no. 115-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes this Doha/Sortha no. 115 herein above.]

चौ०. इहाँ न पच्छपात कछु राखउँ । बेद पुरान संत मत भाषउँ ॥ १ ॥
मोह न नारि नारि कें रूपा । पन्नगारि यह रीति अनूपा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ihām̐ na pacchapāta kachu rākha'um̐. bēda purāna santa mata bhāṣa'um̐. 1.
mōha na nāri nāri kēm̐ rūpā. pannagāri yaha rīti anūpā. 2.

[Sage Kaagbhusund says—] ‘I am not speaking in a partisan way, favouring anyone and taking sides with any one of the two entities, Bhakti and Maya. To wit, what I am telling you is not my personal view or preference, but it is a well-considered view as established by the Vedas and the Purans (primary and ancient scriptures) as well as affirmed by the learned sages and seers. (1)

[And what is it?] Their opinion is that a female is not attracted to, enamoured or aroused by another female’s beauty and charm. Oh the enemy of serpents (a reference to Garud who devours serpents, being an Eagle), this is a unique and strange (but well-established) phenomenon¹. (2)

[Note—¹“I do not speak in a partisan way, but only reiterate what the Vedas, Purans and saints have asserted in this context. A woman is never enamoured by the beauty of another woman.”

This is a well-established phenomenon of Nature that opposites attract, and similars repel. This is seen even in inanimate things of the world—we see this in a magnet. Two opposite poles of a magnet, the north and the south poles, would attract each other, but similar poles repel. A male is attracted to a female and vice versa, but a female is rather jealous, envious of another female instead of being charmed by her.

This observation of Kaagbhusund builds the ground and paves the way for what he will now preach in the following verses.]

माया भगति सुनहु तुम्ह दोऊ । नारि बर्ग जानइ सब कोऊ ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि रघुबीरहि भगति पिआरी । माया खलु नर्तकी बिचारी ॥ ४ ॥

māyā bhagati sunahu tumha dō'ū. nāri barga jāna'i saba kō'ū. 3.
puni raghubīrahi bhagati pi'ārī. māyā khalu nartakī bicārī. 4.

‘Maya’ (worldly delusions) and ‘Bhakti’ (devotion for Lord God) are both of the feminine gender¹. Everyone (i.e. every wise man) is aware of it. (3)

But there is a difference between the two. While ‘Bhakti’ is very dear to Lord Raghubir (Ram) and the Lord is favourably inclined towards it (because it has

auspicious virtues and endeavours to bring the creature nearer to the Lord instead of pushing him away from the him as done by Maya), the poor ‘Maya’ on the other hand is like a cunning dancing girl or a courtesan who is not looked at with respect even by the king himself (who uses her services as and when he requires them, but he dislikes her internally because he knows that she has no character).² (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43; (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 70-b.

‘Maya’ or delusions and ‘Bhakti’ or devotion, both have been classified as being maids of Lord Ram. But the Lord is favourable towards Bhakti because it represents noble and virtuous qualities in a creature that uplift his soul, whereas Maya is simply like a dancing girl as it represents worldly taints and evil qualities that are spiritually demeaning for the creature. So if a creature has the virtue of Bhakti for the Lord in him, Maya is sore affright to disturb such a creature because it would offend the Lord as he prefers Bhakti over Maya.

Bhakti and Maya are treated as ‘females or maids’. This is because their ‘Lord’ here is Sri Ram, a manifested human ‘male’ form of the Supreme Being who was also a ‘King’ of Ayodhya. The Upanishads and other Vedic texts call the Supreme Being as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the Cosmic Male. Another word used as a synonym for the Supreme Being is ‘Brahm’, but Brahm represents the very basis of creation, i.e. the Cosmic Consciousness that has no gender. When this Cosmic Consciousness started the process of creation, there evolved, in a step-by-step manner and in an increasingly grosser form, a cosmic Male and a cosmic Female to give shape to and help in self-propagation of the forthcoming creation, and to maintain its self-perpetuating forward movement in the form of a never ending cycle of creation and destruction. The primary form of the Cosmic Male was known as the ‘Viraat Purush’ (“Male”) and the primary form of the Cosmic Female was known as the ‘Shakti’ (the Male’s authority, powers, dynamism and energy to act and do something).

As in all cases where ‘Shakti’ is involved, it can turn out to be either ‘bad’ or ‘good’. If it is ‘good’ then this Shakti is loved by the Lord; if it turns out to be ‘bad’, it is disliked by the Lord. This is what happens in practice with Bhakti and Maya respectively. Whereas the Lord favours Bhakti, he abhors Maya, though both are under his domain and command.

Remember: These are symbolic ways of explaining complicated metaphysical principles which basically mean that if a living being has the good virtue of devotion and faith for the Lord God inside him, the negative traits associated with delusions would not darken his inner-self.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 71 (b) it is asserted that Maya is like a ‘maid’ servant of Lord Raghubir (Ram). And in Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow this Doha it is asserted that Maya that is so powerful that it makes the whole world dance to its tune is scared of annoying the Lord so much that all its moves are in accordance with the signals given by the movement of Lord Ram’s eyebrows. That is, Maya keeps alert and closely watches how Lord Ram reacts to her maverick tricks. If she gets even a slight hint that any of her moves are disliked by her Lord, she immediately mends her ways.

In the context of Bhakti it is clear that since Lord Ram prefers it over Maya, the latter dares not offend the former because that would indirectly offend her Lord, Sri Ram.

The net effect of this scenario is that if a person has the virtue of 'Bhakti' in him then he is assured of freedom from getting tormented by Maya and the rest of her associates which are listed below.

'Maya' is a term that incorporates in its meaning a lot many spiritual problems. They are called the 'family of Maya' because they are all related to each other and work in tandem. These inalienable components of Maya are formidably powerful so much so that they don't spare even the creator Brahma as well as Lord Shiva from their clutches. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71.

²While having the virtue of Bhakti enables a person to attain spiritual purity and bliss, Maya on the other hand engulfs him in a web of miseries and problems that are associated with this gross and perishable material world of sense objects. So therefore, Lord Ram prefers Bhakti as it helps its adherents to become pious and holy and acquire auspicious spiritual values. Maya pushes the creature into the vortex of worldly desires and injects in him many negative qualities. So Lord Ram dislikes it.

The negative qualities that are natural accompaniments of Maya have been listed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71. They are called the 'family members' of Maya because they all bear the characters of delusion and their resultant problems for the creature (refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71).

These so-called associates or 'family members' of Maya are the following—Moha (attachment, infatuation), Kaam (lust, passion), Trishna (desires, yearning), Krodh (anger), Lobha (greed), Sri Mada (pride of self; pride of honour and achievements, of worldly prosperity and wealth), Gunas (the three inherent qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas that every living being possesses, and which mould his character and personality), Maana Mada (arrogance and haughtiness that comes with honour, success and respect), Joban Jwar (the recklessness and arrogance of youth), Mamta (affection and attachment to worldly things), Matsarya (envy, jealousy), Shoka (grief), Chinta (worry), Maya (delusions), Manorath (hopes, aspirations, vows, desires, determination to do this and achieve that), and the trio consisting of son/progeny-wealth/prosperity-fame/good name.

The independent and combined effects of all these entities on the creature has been explained alongside each verse in the text.]

भगतिहि सानुकूल रघुराया । ताते तेहि डरपति अति माया ॥ ५ ॥

राम भगति निरुपम निरुपाधी । बसइ जासु उर सदा अबाधी ॥ ६ ॥

bhagatihi sānukūla raghurāyā. tāte tēhi ḍarapati ati māyā. 5.
rāma bhagati nirupama nirupādhi. basa'i jāsu ura sadā abādhi. 6.

Lord Ram is kind and favourably disposed towards 'Bhakti' (devotion). This is the reason why 'Maya' (delusion creating powers of the Lord) is scared of it (Bhakti)¹.

[Here, Bhakti and Maya have been personified, and regarded as close

associates of the Lord. ‘Bhakti’ is the favourite of Lord Ram, so the Lord’s maid known as ‘Maya’ is scared to offend the former. On the other hand, Maya does everything within its reach to please Bhakti in order to indirectly please her Lord, Sri Ram, and be in the Lord’s good books by being docile and obedient.] (5)

The spiritual virtue known as ‘Bhakti for Lord Ram’, or devotion for the Lord, is highly pure and immaculate; it is without any worldly taints or negativity; it is matchless in its purity and effectiveness². [Whereas, on the other hand, ‘Maya’ is a corrupt entity, and so it has no moral strength to face the pure entity known as ‘Bhakti’. While ‘Bhakti’ leads the creature towards the Lord, ‘Maya’ pulls him away from him. While ‘Bhakti’ helps the creature obtain liberation and deliverance as well as eternal peace and bliss, ‘Maya’ does the opposite: it forces the creature in the quicksand of worldly delusions and its attendant miseries and torments.]

So, ‘Maya’ is afraid to disturb anyone in whose heart the eclectic spiritual virtue of ‘Bhakti’ finds a permanent residence. Maya is hesitant to play its tricks upon a person in whose heart Bhakti resides³. [Maya knows that if it plays smart with the Lord’s devotee who has Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram in his heart, then it is sure to offend the Lord who shall punish her for her demeanours because, as has been said above, the Lord favours Bhakti for its immaculate and pious nature as well as its endeavour to provide spiritual peace and liberation to the soul of the living being—which Maya does not do.] (6)

[Note—¹It has been said in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 116 herein above that “Maya is like a dancer”. The dancer would adopt the posture that pleases her master, and would synchronise all her dance moves in accordance with the liking of the lord for whom she dances. So obviously, Maya would not invite the wrath of her Lord, Sri Ram, by offending the Lord’s favourite maid known as Bhakti.

²Lord Ram has himself preached on the importance and spiritual value of Bhakti at many places in Ram Charit Manas.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16 (to Laxman); (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36 (to Sabari); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43 (to Narad); (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 85; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 86; (iii) Doha no. 87-a (to Kaagbhusund); (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46 (to the citizens of Ayodhya).

³Goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of knowledge and wisdom, has also endorsed this fact that a person in whose heart Lord Ram’s Bhakti resides, Maya has no effect on him. That is, it is not possible to delude a sincere devotee of the Lord as the Lord protects him from all negative influences that may harm his peace of mind and undermine his spiritual future. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 295.]

तेहि बिलोकि माया सकुचाई । करि न सकइ कछु निज प्रभुताई ॥ ७ ॥
अस बिचारि जे मुनि बिग्यानी । जाचहिं भगति सकल सुख खानी ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi bilōki māyā sakucā'ī. kari na saka'i kachu nija prabhutā'ī. 7.
asa bicāri jē muni bigyānī. jācahiṁ bhagati sakala sukha khānī. 8.

Maya is hesitant and reluctant to offend Bhakti and those who have this virtue in themselves; it is unable to play its dirty tricks and impose its will on those persons who have Bhakti in their hearts. (7)

Taking this fact into consideration, wise sages who are learned and intelligent have deduced that 'Bhakti' is a mine of all happiness and peace. (8)

[Note—Kaagbhusund emphasises in this foregoing discourse that out of all the paths and ways that are open to a spiritual aspirant, the best and the easiest is that of 'Bhakti' or having devotion for Lord God and total submission to the Lord. This ensures that 'Maya' and its powerful companions (Moha, Kaam, Trishna, Krodh, Lobha, Mada, Maan, Mamta, Matsarya, Chinta, Shoka, Manorath etc. as listed in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71) do not torment the aspirant.

Besides these components of Maya, there are others, collectively herded in one group called 'Avidya' or ignorance. This Avidya is like a knot around the heart and the mind of the spiritual aspirant. Its characters, salient features and how it affects the creature has been discussed below, from Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 119.]

दो०. यह रहस्य रघुनाथ कर बेगि न जानइ कोइ ।
जो जानइ रघुपति कृपाँ सपनेहुँ मोह न होइ ॥ ११६ (क) ॥
dōhā.

yaha rahasya raghunātha kara bēgi na jāna'i kō'i.
jō jāna'i raghupati kṛpām̐ sapanēhum̐ mōha na hō'i. 116 (a).

This topic concerning Maya and Bhakti (as discussed in the foregoing verses) is very esoteric, and it is a secret related to Lord Ragnath (Sri Ram) that no one can know easily. Whoever knows it, it is due to the grace of Lord Raghupati on him. And once it happens (i.e. once one knows the secret relationship between Maya and Bhakti, and how easily Maya can be controlled by the medium of Bhakti for the Lord), he cannot have delusions even in his dream¹. [Why? Because he would have developed Bhakti for the Lord in his heart, and therefore would not be affected by Maya or worldly delusions.] [Doha no. 116 (a).]

[Note—¹Not having delusions even in one's dream' is a figure of speech that simply means he will never have delusions ever, under any circumstance. This is because when a wise person inculcates the auspicious virtue of Bhakti (devotion) in his heart, he is blessed by all the goodness that are natural accompaniments of Bhakti, and one such bonus benefit is that Maya (worldly delusions) do not affect him. The other natural benefit is that he becomes a receipt of the Lord's grace.]

औरु ग्यान भगति कर भेद सुनहु सुप्रबीन ।
जो सुनि होइ राम पद प्रीति सदा अबिछीन ॥ ११६ (ख) ॥

aura'u gyāna bhagati kara bhēda sunahu suprabīna.
jō suni hō'i rāma pada prīti sadā abichīna. 116 (b).

Oh wise and sagacious Garud, listen now to the difference that exists between Bhakti and Gyan (true spiritual, theological and metaphysical knowledge that is attained by diligent study of the scriptures)—by hearing which (or by being aware of the relationship between Bhakti and Gyan) one develops steady, uninterrupted and perpetual affection (or love) for the holy feet of Lord Ram (which is one of the signs of having Bhakti for the Lord God). [Doha no. 116 (b).]

[Note—It ought to be noted here that when a person is overcome with delusions, he cannot be said to have ‘Gyan’—knowledge of the truth or knowledge of spiritual mysteries; gnosis. So, having Gyan it self precludes the influence of Maya. But a problem arises here often—and it is that with acquisition of Gyan one sometimes becomes proud and arrogant about his wisdom, knowledge, expertise, sagacity and erudition. Again, more often than not, acquisition of Gyan brings in its wake fame and name, and with them comes the lure of the lucre. This seeds greed and desires, which eventually lead to a vicious cycle of more greed and more desires. Sometimes it so happens that if a person who considers himself as a ‘Gyani’ (i.e. one who possesses Gyan) is not shown due respect, he feels annoyed and becomes angry for being shown disrespect.

So, simply having ‘Gyan’ does not mean that a person is free from the negative traits so closely associated with Maya. Say then, what difference does it make between person completely ridden with Maya and a person claiming himself to be wise and having the virtue of Gyan in him? Both are equally deluded and equally ignorant. They both become easy prey to nefarious designs of all the so-called ‘family members’ of Maya as enumerated earlier in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71. It is like a vicious whirlpool that sucks the creature in its swirling vortex.

Therefore, the discussion that follows below in regards to the relationship between Gyan and Bhakti has a direct bearing on the relationship between Maya and Bhakti—because if Gyan is not properly used, its consequences are as horrendous as the effect of Maya. ‘Not proper use of Gyan’ is called ‘Agyan’—or, ignorance. This ‘Agyan’ is also a family member of Maya, because the result they produce on the creature are the same.]

चौ०. सुनहु तात यह अकथ कहानी । समुझत बनइ न जाइ बखानी ॥ १ ॥
ईस्वर अंस जीव अबिनासी । चेतन अमल सहज सुख रासी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sunahu tāta yaha akatha kahānī. samujhata bana'i na jā'i bakhānī. 1.
īvara ansa jīva abināsī. cētana amala sahaja sukha rāsī. 2.

Sage Kaagbhusund told Garud who had approached the former to dispel his ignorance on spiritual subjects—“Listen dear to this story that cannot be described in words, but it can be understood with a little bit of wisdom and sagacity. It tells us in essence the true nature of a Jiva, the living being or the creature who becomes trapped in this world and gets separated from the Supreme Being.

The Jiva is a fraction (or an image, a representative) of the Ishwar, the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma. Hence, the Jiva is also imperishable, Consciousness personified, pure, uncorrupt and immaculate in its truthful form, and an abode of bliss and happiness, just like its principal known as Ishwar¹. (Chaupai line nos. 1-2).

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15 Lord Ram has explained to his younger brother how the Jiva (the individual living being) feels separated from the Supreme Being due to the delusory effects of Maya though they are one and the same entities as the underlying Truth in them is one and the same ‘pure Consciousness’ which is universal, immutable, all-pervading and all-encompassing in this living world.

Upanishads clearly say that the true identity of any living being, the ‘Jiva’ is his Atma, and this Atma is his pure conscious ‘self’, the ‘soul’. The word ‘Jiva’ itself is indicative of this fact—for it means an entity that is ‘alive, living’.

A creature’s physical existence in this world has two components—one is his visible, gross physical body which has no value as a ‘living entity’ as it has no life of its own, and the other is his invisible, subtle body which harbours the ‘the spark of life’ inside this gross body. It is the latter that makes the body ‘consciousness’ or the creature ‘alive’. If this ‘consciousness’ is removed from the gross body, the latter would be as good as dead.

Therefore, who actually is the ‘Jiva’, the living being? Obviously, the answer is ‘consciousness’ that is also known as the ‘Atma’ that lives inside the body of the Jiva, and not the gross body itself.

Now, this ‘consciousness’ is the true ‘lord of the body of the Jiva’ because the body obeys its commands and the body has any value only because this consciousness lives inside it. Otherwise, the body is ‘dead’ and ‘worthless’. This story pertains to the micro level of creation. When we consider the larger picture at the cosmic level, the macro level of creation, the same thing is replicated albeit in a larger and all-encompassing form. That is, the consciousness that gives life to an individual Jiva also gives life to all other Jivas in this creation. This macrocosmic form of consciousness is known as Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness.

The individual consciousness is a part or fraction of the cosmic Consciousness and bears a direct resemblance to the latter in all respects just like the case of the air element that all-pervading, free and without any boundaries while it lives in the open sky, but assuming a limited dimension when one considers its presence inside the walls of a vessel. There is no difference between the two forms of air as cited above; it is only how one perceives it in different contexts.

Likewise, the Jiva is a reflection of Ishwar. That is, what Ishwar, the ‘Lord’ of creation, is to the entire creation as a whole, Jiva bears the same relationship with this creation at an individual level, being the ‘lord’ of the body in which he lives and its immediate surroundings.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 15.

We have read above that the Jiva’s true identity is the Atma or the individual soul which is pure Consciousness. Similarly, the true identity of Ishwar, who is also

known as the Parmatma or the Supreme Being, is the cosmic Atma or cosmic Soul which is also pure Consciousness. The only difference is in the level at which this 'Consciousness' is perceived: the Jiva is Consciousness at the micro level of creation, while Parmatma is the same Consciousness at the macro level of creation.]

सो मायाबस भयउ गोसाईं । बँध्यो कीर मरकट की नाई ॥ ३ ॥

sō māyābasa bhaya'u gōsā'īm. bamḍhyō kīra marakaṭa kī nā'īm. 3

Oh Lord ("gōsā'īm"—i.e. Garud)! This Jiva (that inherits the values and characters of Ishwar), in its stupid ignorance and greed, allows itself to be tied in knots (to so many ignorance-driven misconceptions about its own self as well as the world around it) and dominated by Maya (delusions) just like a monkey or a parrot who get caught due to their own ignorance and greed. [The Jiva allows itself to get trapped due to Maya, and out of its own free will allows itself to get caught like a monkey and a bird who get caught due to their own greed.]¹ (3)

[Note—¹The monkey and the parrot are naturally free creatures of the wild, but they get caught by animal and bird catchers respectively when they are lured by some bait, usually some kind of eatable. It is the greed that makes them captive; it is their ignorance about the real intention of the food thrown towards them to catch them. They think that the monkey or the bird catcher is very kind as he is offering them food, not realising that these people are selfish and have done so to trap and enslave them for the rest of their lives.

This allusion is used to describe how the Jiva and his Atma are caught by the numerous charms of the material world.

How are the parrot and the monkey caught? The bird-catcher attaches bait that dangles from a string hanging at the end of a stick that is stuck in the ground. The poor parrot alights on the stick and tries to eat the bait, but the string begins to swirl and go round and round because of the parrot's attempt to reach the bait. The parrot becomes so engrossed in trying to eat the bait that always moves away from its beak that it loses awareness of the impending danger while the bird catcher gets time to pounce upon the poor creature to grab it. The swirling and revolving bait completely confuses the parrot and makes it deluded.

In the case of the monkey, the catcher puts a handful of grains in a pitcher with a narrow neck and fixes it to the ground. The greedy monkey first puts in its hands in an attempt to take out the grain, but its closed fist gets stuck in the narrow neck of the pitcher. Frustrated and not wishing to let go of the grain, the monkey puts in his head. The monkey catcher then pounces upon it and catches it.

In both these cases, if the parrot and the monkey had been wise they would have not been caught. But it is their greed and desire that have forced them into captivity, and therefore they themselves are to be blamed for their captivity.

Similarly, the Jiva, the living being, is lured by the material charms of the world and the gratification they provide to the gross organs of the body. The Jiva becomes overcome by Maya or delusions, thinking that the world is its favourite place, that the world will give it happiness and joy, that the real world is this gross material world in which the body enjoys and that there is no other thing as a subtle world of pure bliss that comes with realisation of the 'Self'.

So what happens? The Jiva goes all hog for the material world; it allows itself to be fully engrossed in and tied to the affairs of this deluding, material, gross and perishable world without understanding that it will rob it of its peace and tranquility. This is what Maya does to the Jiva—delude the latter into believing that what essentially is a treasury of misery will give him happiness.

Like the parrot and the monkey, if the Jiva becomes enlightened and self-realised, if wisdom and erudition dawn upon his mind and intellect, then he can distance himself from the material world, and thereby prevent his ‘self’ or his Atma from getting trapped.

The Jiva or the creature cannot serve two masters or lords at the same time. It can either serve the Lord God and his fraction living inside the body of the Jiva as his Atma by having devotion for the Lord and becoming self-realised respectively, or it can serve the external world and its own physical body by appeasing both of them by devoting his time and energy to fulfil the demands of the world or making efforts to gratify the instincts of the sense organ of the body respectively. Even the *Holy Bible* is clear on this point when it says: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon”—refer: St. Matthews, 6/24.

Refer also to Tulsidas’ excellent Book of Prayers known as ‘Vinai Patrika’, verse no. 246, stanza nos. 3-4. This book has also been published in English by this humble author.]

जड़ चेतनहि ग्रंथि परि गई । जदपि मृषा छूटत कठिनई ॥ ४ ॥

jaṛa cētanahi granthi pari gaī. jadapi mṛṣā chūṭata kaṭhinaī. 4.

In this way, that Jiva, whose true self is pure ‘consciousness’ (“Chetan”) that is subtle and sublime by its inherent nature, became gross and dull (“Jada”) once it allowed itself to be tied down by the Granthis (spiritual knots of delusions and ignorance). To wit, out of ignorance and delusions, the ‘spirit’ (the holy Atma which is subtle and sublime) and the ‘matter’ (the gross material world) have become tied together in knots known as the Granthis. [In this way, that which was basically subtle and sublime pure ‘consciousness’ became tied down in knots and become something that is gross, dull and inane. So it is like tying two basically independent and separate things together by a strong knot.]

Though this knot is artificial and self-created and based on delusions (and therefore seems that it can be broken at will), yet it is hard to break and get rid of.

[It is easy said than done. Just like it may be theoretically possible for the monkey and the parrot cited above to get themselves free, but in practice it is almost impossible to realise it.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹So we see that the Atma is tied to the world in the ‘knot’ of attachments, attractions and infatuations (“Moha”) that is created by Maha (delusions) and its companion Avidya (ignorance). This knot has to be broken obviously if the Atma wishes to free its self from the bondage related to the world. We shall be reading soon how the Atma can achieve this.

The Upanishads have explained this ‘knot’ or ‘Granthi’ in detail. Now, let us read what it signifies.

The numerous emotional, sentimental and spiritual hurdles that an aspirant faces are all referred to as the Granthis because they are like the hard shell of the nut which is difficult to crack. All these Granthis of the Jiva (the living being) are created out of ignorance and delusions (Avidya or Agyan, and Maya respectively) that surround it. Just like the case that we can reach the actual kernel of the coconut fruit after we have broken the hard shell that surrounds it, the creature can realize the true nature of the Atma, the 'self which is pure consciousness and a fraction of the supreme Atma, the Parmatma, only when the Jiva is able to overcome the dominance of Maya and Agyan.

Only when this shell is cracked can one find the nut. Similarly, only when one overcomes the numerous obstacles and hurdles faced by him in his spiritual pursuit that it is possible for him to have access to the fount of eternal bliss and peace that comes with Brahm-realisation, which is being aware of the Absolute Truth of existence.

According to the metaphysical interpretation of the term Granthi, it is the various knots present in the heart that shackle the Atma and prevent its liberation and deliverance. These Granthis are called Hridaya Granthis because they stand in the way of a man obtaining freedom from his fetters that keep him tied to this world. Once he is able to rupture them, he finds liberation even while he is still alive in this world. This fact has been clearly emphasized in Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 15 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Refer also to Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 84; Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 8.]

तब ते जीव भयउ संसारी । छूट न ग्रंथि न होइ सुखारी ॥ ५ ॥

श्रुति पुरान बहु कहेउ उपाई । छूट न अधिक अधिक अरुझाई ॥ ६ ॥

taba tē jīva bhaya'u sansārī. chūṭa na granthi na hō'i sukhārī. 5.

śruti purāna bahu kahē'u upāī. chūṭa na adhika adhika arujhāī. 6.

{What happens when the Jiva is surrounded by the various Granthis? This question is answered now.}

It is ever since then (i.e. since the time the creature's Atma became trapped in the web of delusions created by the different 'Granthis' and began to think its self as separate from the Parmatma) that the Jiva became an entity that related to this world (which itself is gross and artificial like the Granthis), and therefore becomes subjected to birth and death (inspite of its true identity being the Atma that is pure consciousness, an entity that is imperishable and eternal)¹.

Now as it happens, the Jiva cannot get happiness and comfort till the time he is not able to get rid of these Granthis, or the knots that bog down the Atma and tie it in knots of delusions and ignorance. [To wit, the Jiva cannot get rid of the knot that ties him to this world, and therefore he cannot get rid of the misery attendant to it and become happy. He remains wallowing in pain, misery and grief for an endless period of time.]² (5)

Though the scriptures (Vedas and Purans) have prescribed a number of ways to free oneself from this knot, but to implement them is difficult, and so the cycle of misery

and torments not only continues unabated but this tying-knot gets sturdier and stronger with the passage of time. (6)

[Note—¹If a person does not allow himself to be deluded by the overtures of Maya, if he is strong in his mind and convictions so as to be of a firm belief that his ‘true self’ is the Atma that is an image of the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, the person is said to be happy and blissful. He has no worries and no problems with the world.

But this is an ideal situation that is not the norm; it is rather an exception. The norm is that the creature gets tied in knots of various denominations. It is very difficult to free oneself from these knots or Granthis. The ‘tied and knotted’ creature, the living being, begins to think that his gross body is his real identity (instead of the Atma), that the world in which he lives is the real thing and his habitat, that this world and its things are meant for his happiness and joy. So the Atma gets ‘hooked’ to this material world of sense objects through the creature’s gross body.

Now, everyone knows that this body was born at a given date and time, and that it would die some day and time. The world too had a specific beginning and would come to an end some or the other day. Hence, when the Jiva becomes deluded, he thinks that he had a birth and he would die. The fact is just the opposite. It is because the Jiva’s true identity is not the gross body but the Atma, the soul that is consciousness personified as well as an eternal and imperishable entity.

So the conclusion is obvious and clear: When the Jiva gets tied to spiritual knots of ignorance and delusions, he begins to identify himself with the body and the world, and by logic and corollary to the cycle of death and birth simply because the body and the world take a birth and eventually die.

²The condition of such a Jiva who is trapped in the knot of Maya is like the monkey and the parrot cited above in verse no. 3. The monkey and the parrot have got themselves in shackles, and this keeps them a slave. They cannot find happiness and joy of freedom that they had originally enjoyed before getting trapped.]

जीव हृदयं तम मोह बिसेषी । ग्रंथि छूट किमि परइ न देखी ॥ ७ ॥
अस संजोग ईस जब करई । तबहुँ कदाचित सो निरुअरई ॥ ८ ॥

jīva hr̥dayam̐ tama mōha bisēṣī. granthi chūṭa kimi para'i na dēkhī. 7.
asa saṁjōga īsa jaba kara'ī. tabahum̐ kadācita sō niru'ara'ī. 8.

There is darkness of ignorance represented by Moha (worldly attractions, attachment and infatuation) in the heart of the Jiva, and this clouds his vision (reasoning) so much therefore he cannot see the knot in the first place.

Since he cannot realise that his Atma is tied in some kind of a knot, then say how can he even ever try to un-knot or untie it and break free from it? [Unless the Jiva is able to see or realise that there is a knot around his neck, till the time he becomes aware of any shackle tied to his Atma or even become aware of its existence—how can he search for ways to free himself from this spiritual bondage?]¹ (7)

It is only when the Lord God provides some good chance that this opportunity (to break free from the knot of delusions and ignorance) can be availed of.² (8)

[Note—¹If the Jiva (the living being) allows himself to be mired by Moha (worldly attractions and infatuations) which are products of Maya (delusions) and its accompanying Agyan or Avidya (ignorance) by getting attracted to and attached with this world and its material charms, it is unable to realise the truth of his own Atma. This is equivalent to saying that the Jiva is surrounded by the “Tama of Moha”, or to remain in dark about the truth, to remain ignorant about the reality. And what is this reality or truth? It is that the Atma, the pure consciousness that resides in the subtle space of the Jiva’s heart, is his true identity and ‘self’, and not the gross body. It is this gross body which interacts with the world and gets attracted to the latter’s charms, because the organs of perception of the body are attracted towards their respective objects in the world.

For instance, the eyes are attracted to pleasant sights of the world and if the Jiva is not careful drives him to these sights so such an extent that he becomes obsessed with the desire to see the sights as much as he can. This creates longing and the Jiva would do everything under its control to be able to see those sights that please his eyes. Sometimes this may cause embarrassment and at other times this may land him in actual serious trouble when he becomes an eye witness to unsavoury developments. But in his ignorance the Jiva does not realise the bad consequences of his desire to keep the eye contented and gratified. In other words, the organ of the body known as the eye has landed the Jiva in a vicious circle of desires and expecting gratifications from the physical world and then getting attached or hooked to it. This is also metaphorically depicted by saying that the Jiva is tied to the Granthi, which is like spiritual quicksand, and it is not easily visible to the Jiva due to the darkness of delusion and ignorance that surround the Atma residing in the subtle space of the Jiva’s heart.

The *Holy Bible* also cites the example of the ‘eye’ to teach us how the physical world pollutes our innerselves in St. Matthews, 6/22-23 when it says: “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

The ‘pure consciousness’ known as the Atma lives in the subtle space of the heart of all living beings, the Jiva. For all practical purposes, this Atma is identified with the gross body of the creature as it is the latter that is visible to the world and interacts with it. For instance, we identify a car in a parking lot by its external features and not by the engine or the chasis that is hidden inside the car’s body. Likewise, the world recognises the gross body of the Jiva as his identity, and not bothering about the Jiva’s Atma, which in reality is the Jiva’s ‘true self’.

Since the Atma has to interact with the world through the medium of the gross body, it becomes dependant upon it. And the irony is that this world, as well as the body, are both gross, inane and perishable entities unlike the Atma which is subtle, sublime and eternal consciousness. So, if the Jiva allows itself to be mired in delusions and ignorance it is unable to realise the truth. This is equivalent to saying that it is surrounded by darkness (“Tama”). This is also metaphorically depicted by saying that the Jiva is tied to the Granthi or spiritual quicksand which it is unable to see due to the darkness of delusion and ignorance.

²And what is the good chance? When the Lord God is gracious and has mercy on the creature, he sends a healthy cow to reside in the creature’s heart as narrated below just like a father sends a cow to his ailing son so that he can avail of her pure milk and other dairy products such as butter and butter-milk and get back to robust health. In

this case the ailment is the degradation to which the soul of the creature has been subjected to due to his ignorance and indulgence in this deluding world of material sense objects. When such a creature serves this symbolic cow and drinks its wholesome milk and eats its wholesome food as described in the following narrative, his Atma regains its lost vigour and spiritual energy, and begins to shine once again like the sun does after the dark clouds are dispersed.

Therefore, this can happen only when a beautiful and holy cow symbolizing faith and devotion for the Lord God comes and makes its abode in the Jiva's courtyard (heart) that this opportunity can be made good use of. The Jiva now serves this cow, takes its milk, boils it, cools it, makes butter from it by churning it, and becomes healthy by eating it. A lot of metaphor and symbolism are used here. But in simple term they all mean that when the Jiva begins to serve this symbolic cow and benefit from its milk that stands for gaining spiritual health, he begins to inculcate auspicious virtues one by one as follows in Chaupai line nos. 9-16.]

सात्त्विक श्रद्धा धेनु सुहाई । जौं हरि कृपाँ हृदयँ बस आई ॥ ९ ॥

sāttvika śrad'dhā dhēnu suhā'ī. jaur̥m hari kṛpām̐ hr̥dayam̐ basa ā'ī. 9.

{The following verses use the metaphor of the holy cow who has been properly served and nourished to describe how the Jiva can find freedom from the knot tied around him. First the cow is brought and kept near the Jiva's true self, i.e. in the subtle of his heart where his Atma lives. This cow is then properly nourished, and then milked. From this milk is extracted clarified butter which is then used to light the symbolic lamp of wisdom that would help to remove the darkness of Moha (worldly attachments, attractions and infatuations), that has been caused by Maya (delusions) and Avidya (ignorance), and which surrounds the Atma (the pure conscious 'self') of the Jiva (living being). With this light the Jiva is able to see the various knots symbolising worldly delusions, and then he makes efforts to break free from them.

This entire discourse on the lines of the discussions of great metaphysical principles in the Upanishads is given by sage Kaagbhusund to Garud, and is discussed below from the current verse no. 9—right upto Doha no. 118 herein below.

If by the grace of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord God), the Jiva becomes fortunate enough to have sincere faith in the Lord and devotion for him, then there are chances that he can be liberated. How will this happen? It is explained now—}

If by the grace of Lord Hari, the Jiva should first get access to a symbolic 'cow' represented by the virtue of pure and simple faith ("sāttvika śrad'dhā") in the Lord, and this cow comes to live in his pious heart---(9),

[Note—The main requirement is to have 'faith in the Lord God' in order to attain liberation and deliverance from the knots or the Granthis that tie the Jiva to the numerous delusions associated with this life. Once one has 'faith' in the Lord, 'devotion' comes immediately and naturally because one begins to regard the Lord as his saviour and dear friend who will look after all his welfare and provide him succour and solace.

Since the Atma lives in the subtle space of the heart, and this Atma is the Jiva's true self, this metaphoric cow representing faith for the Lord God must also live in the heart.

The heart in which there is place for the Lord God is indeed a 'pious heart'.

The *Avadhut Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 4-5, and the *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 3, verse nos. 1-13 also use the metaphor of the cow to describe the exalted state of a self-realised spiritual aspirant who has developed internal dispassion towards the world but continues to live and serve it selflessly.]

जप तप ब्रत जम नियम अपारा । जे श्रुति कह सुभ धर्म अचारा ॥ १० ॥
तेइ तृन हरित चरै जब गाई । भाव बच्छ सिसु पाइ पेन्हाई ॥ ११ ॥

japa tapa brata jama niyama apārā. jē śruti kaha subha dharma acārā. 10.
tē'i tṛna harita carai jaba gā'ī. bhāva baccha sisu pā'i pēnhā'ī. 11.

[If one has a cow, it is necessary to feed it. Hence—]

---Then he diligently observes or practices all sorts of auspicious deeds and noble virtues that have been enumerated by the Vedas—such as Japa (repetition of holy name of the Lord), Tapa (penance and austerity), Brat/Vrat (keeping religious vows; sacred observances), Yams (self-restraint, such as continence, non-violence, not-stealing, non-possession etc.), and Niyam (certain noble practices, such as contentedness, external and internal purity, self-study and self-discipline, self-surrender to God, and so on), and so many other countless auspicious observances and practices---(10),

---As these auspicious observances and practices are like green grass that the symbolic cow (residing in his heart) grazes¹.

When well fed, milk begins to pour out of its udder when it sees its calf. Similarly, when the Jiva practices these auspicious virtues in his life, he develops piety and holiness in his heart. In other words, piety and holiness begin to ooze out from his internal being in a spontaneous way like the milk oozing out of a cow's udder when it sees its calf.² (11)

[Note—¹The cow representing faith in God is properly nourished if the Jiva practices all these noble virtues in his life. that the Jiva has brought in his heart. In other words, faith in God is fostered and its aim to free the Jiva from the entangling world is achieved in a natural way if the Jiva practices these noble virtues in his life. If a cow is well nourished it produces good milk. The nourishing properties of milk are directly proportionate to the food that is consumed by the cow. Hence, if the Jiva practices these auspicious values, his Atma symbolically gets proper nourishment.

This is just like the case of a person drinking milk of a health cow; he benefits from good health and all round vigour. A healthy person can fight off diseases and even his enemies if his body is strong and well tuned. So likewise, practicing these noble virtues and developing these blessed characters in life, the Jiva is able to slowly empower his Atma to prepare to break free from the Granthis of Maya and Moha in due course of time.

²In this allusion, the sight and the thought of the Lord God is like the cow seeing or remembering its calf. Milk begins to ooze out of the cow's udder as soon as this happens. Likewise, a Jiva who has faith for Lord God in his heart and practices the

virtues mentioned in these verses, automatically begins to have piety, holiness and devotion springing up in his heart.]

नोइ निबृत्ति पात्र बिस्वासा । निर्मल मन अहीर निज दासा ॥ १२ ॥

nō'i nibṛtti pātra bisvāsā. nirmala mana ahīra nija dāsā. 12.

{Now, the milk of the cow is to be collected in a vessel by the person who draws it from the cow's udder.}

In order to milk the cow its hind legs are tied by a string (so that it does not kick at the bucket. Likewise, the spiritual aspirant, the Jiva, should use the auspicious virtue of renunciation and dispassion (nibṛtti) to tie all the wayward tendencies of his Atma, as well as to prevent it from 'kicking the bucket'¹.

Firm faith and believe in the effectiveness of all the virtues enumerated above as well as in the holiness of his own Atma and Lord God are like the bucket in which the milk of the cow is collected².

Pure and pious Mana (mind and heart; the inner-self) is like the milkman who milks this cow. Such a Mana is like one's obedient servant who is at the beck and call of its master because it would then obey what the Jiva (here meaning the Jiva's Atma) tells it to do. [Otherwise, all spiritual pursuits are useless as the Mana won't allow the Jiva to suffer hardships that must be endured if one wishes to gain something worthwhile in life.]³ (12)

[Note—¹The body of the Jiva wants self gratification and seeks pleasure and comfort from the sense objects of the world. If the Jiva begins to practice the auspicious virtues mentioned in the foregoing verse no. 10, the body tries to resist as it causes discomfort to it. Now, here the Jiva has to be firm: he must try to restrict all the wayward tendencies of his body and the Atma that would cause hindrance in his spiritual path and neutralise whatever benefits he has accumulated by diligently practicing the aforesaid virtues.

Just like the cow kicking and toppling the bucket in which the milk is being collected if its hind legs are not tied, the Jiva would also lose all the gains he has made if he fails to restrict his sense organs and the mind. Everything would come to a naught due to carelessness on his part.

²After all, if a person harbours doubts about the ability and effectiveness of any effort he is making to reach his goal, his efforts would be half-hearted and so the results would not be to the expected mark. This creates further confusion. The person believes that the path or means he had chosen were wrong, but he forgets that he had not put all his energy and effort in achieving his goal as he had been ridden by scepticism at every step of the way. How can he then expect full results? He is to blame for his misfortune, and not the path or the mean.

Similarly, if the Jiva does not have firmness of belief and faith, then all his spiritual endeavours are bound to fail and sooner or later he would go back to his old ways.

³If the servant is disobedient he will not obey his master. The master who owns the cow tells his servant, the milkman, to properly feed the cow he has brought home. Then he orders the servant, the milkman, to tie the hind legs of the cow when it is

being milked. What happens? The cow is under-nourished; the milk that it produces is not to the standard; and it will kick the bucket in which the milk is being collected, thereby spilling whatever milk it produces and bringing everything to a naught to the chagrin of its owner.

Similarly, the Atma here is the real master because it is Jiva's true identity. The Mana (mind and heart) is an instrument that the Atma uses to guide the body. If the Mana won't listen to the instructions of the Atma, the result would be that the Jiva's gross body would not cooperate and sooner or later all spiritual efforts would have to be abandoned. So its very important to have an obedient Mana.]

परम धर्ममय पय दुहि भाई । अवटै अनल अकाम बनाई ॥ १३ ॥

तोष मरुत तब छमाँ जुड़ावै । धृति सम जावनु देइ जमावै ॥ १४ ॥

parama dharmamaya paya duhi bhā'ī. avaṭai anala akāma banā'ī. 13.
tōṣa maruta taba chamāṁ' jurāvai. dhṛti sama jāvanu dē'i jamāvai. 14.

Oh Brother! After drawing this milk representing the best of auspicious spiritual virtues, one should now boil this milk by putting it on fire symbolised by not having any worldly desires and wishes¹. (13)

Once it is boiled, this milk should be cooled down by fanning it with the breath symbolised by auspicious virtues of 'Santosh' (contentment) and 'Kshama' (forgiveness)².

To this cooled milk is now added a little bit of curd representing fortitude, tolerance, equanimity and coolness of the mind.³ (14)

[Note—¹After the milk is drawn from the cow it must be first boiled before consumption. The fire needed to boil it here is represented by the grand virtue of having no desires related to the world. In other words, the Jiva must not expect any worldly gains by pursuing the spiritual path. Frankly speaking, this is the very reason why all the strict observations are being followed in the first place. Their aim is not at all to acquire any worldly fame and glory.

²Being contented with whatever one has, and practicing forgiveness enables a person to become calm and peaceful in the world. With limited needs and restricted desires he is contented. Even if anyone creates any obstacle in his path or takes away whatever he has, if he forgives him instead of seeking revenge, it also gives him peace and tranquillity. Both 'contentedness' and 'forgiveness' go hand-in-hand.

The word 'breath' is very significant here. When one is not contented and when he wants to take revenge, he puffs and pants, he begins to rant and curse. This is like spewing hot breath. On the other hand, if a person is contented and forgives others, his breath is cool as he is not agitated and worked-up.

³The best and the most nutritious part of a cow's milk is its clarified butter known as 'Ghee'. This Ghee is the crystalised or solidified form of the best in milk; the rest is like water. The process that is being described here is how this butter is made from milk. The virtues mentioned in this stanza are also one of the most auspicious virtues in a person. These virtues are also 'soothing and cool' in nature like the butter itself. It

must be understood here that a lot of symbolism is employed to explain the underlying truth.]

मुदिताँ मथै बिचार मथानी । दम अधार रजु सत्य सुबानी ॥ १५ ॥

तब मथि काढ़ि लेइ नवनीता । बिमल बिराग सुभग सुपुनीता ॥ १६ ॥

muditām^१ mathai bicāra mathānī. dama adhāra raju satya subānī. 15.
taba mathi kāḍhi lē'i navanītā. bimala birāga subhaga supunītā. 16.

Once the symbolic milk solidifies or condenses and settles in the form of curd (by the process described in the foregoing verses) in the earthen vessel represented by the virtue of “Mudita” (cheerfulness), it should now be churned using the churning-rod symbolised by “Vichar” (proper thought, analysis, contemplation and reflection). This churning-rod is fastened to a stick representing “Dama” (self-restraint, self-control and forbearance), and the string/cord used to do the actual churning is symbolised by the grand virtues of “Satya” and “Subani” (truthfulness and speaking words that are pleasing but truthful respectively)¹. (15)

[When the curd is churned, butter is the product. This ‘butter’ is being described now.] In this way, when the curd has been duly churned, one gets fresh and excellent butter that symbolises the eclectic virtue of “Vairagy²” (renunciation, detachment, dispassion etc.) (16)

[Note—¹What are the virtues that lead one to acquisition of Vairagya? They are—proper thought and reasoning, self-restraint and forbearance, and truthfulness.

Besides these, there is one more condition—and it is ‘cheerfulness’. This condition is very significant. It means that the spiritual aspirant should willingly and gladly observe all the restrictions listed in these verses. He should not treat even a single spiritual practice as something being forced on him; he should not treat them as a burden on him. It is because if a person does anything cheerfully and willingly, his heart gets involved in this exercise, and it is the heart where this symbolic cow has been kept, and it is the heart where the Atma lives too.

²In the *Holy Bible*, the importance of Vairagya is stressed in St. Matthew, 6/19-21: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

This virtue of Vairagya is the culmination, the ‘fruit’ of all the religious observances practiced by the spiritual aspirant just like the butter which is the excellent extract of milk and represents the best qualities in a given sample of milk. If the sample of milk is adulterated with water or any other impurity, the quantity and quality of butter would be proportionately affected. Hence, the more careful, diligent and honest a person is in observing the other principles of spiritual practice, the easier it becomes for him to acquire Vairagya, and the Vairagya itself would be robust and of fine quality.

The term ‘Vairagya’ means complete renunciation and detachment towards everything that is non-truth and detrimental to the creature’s spiritual wellbeing.

The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 4 and 37 lists certain qualities which a spiritual aspirant must possess if he is to be an honest person who has actually accepted the vows of Vairagya. To quote this Upanishad—

“verse no. 4 = He should abandon all kind of attractions, attachments, infatuations, longings or a sense of belonging that he might have for anything—i.e. he should develop profound degree of renunciation as mentioned earlier in verse no. 2 above. He should learn to exercise the greatest of restraint on his self and the organs of the gross body.

Instead, he should be firmly of the view that his true ‘self’ is nothing else but pure consciousness which is a mere neutral witness of everything, without getting emotionally attached with anything. That is, he should develop the noble and auspicious view that ‘I am that pure immaculate cosmic Consciousness which is a neutral witness to everything in this world.’ {A witness is supposed to be neutral, unemotional, detached and uninvolved in the happening. This helps him to observe things in the correct perspective and his version is regarded as authentic as opposed to biased witnesses who would see things from a pre-conceived angle and develop a tainted view of the same event. If a witness to an event is not dispassionate and neutral, then he is not worth relying; he is not a true and honest witness. Therefore, a sincere seeker of the knowledge of Brahm should, and is expected to, inculcate the great virtues of complete dispassion for, detachment with and non-involvement in the world and its affairs.} (4).

“verse no. 37 = A Vairagi (a renunciate and dispassionate person who has sacrificed his desires for worldly charms in order to attain spiritual emancipation and salvation) abandons all forms of contacts or companies with everything related to ‘grossness and untruth’ such as the world and the body just like a person running away from a snake or throwing one if it is caught by mistake. {That is, he is terribly scared of this contact and treats it as dangerous as the snake. He might be entangled in it till he has not become aware of the Truth, but once this awareness comes he would not lose a single moment in discarding the world and the body.}

A Vairagi desirous of sacrificing the sensual attractions of worldly charms and the overwhelming urge for sense gratification, collectively called ‘Kaam’ (literally lust, yearnings, lasciviousness and passions; desire for sensual gratification and enjoyments of the material world and its juicy attractions) on the altar of nobler pursuits and higher goals of life should abandon contact with a beautiful woman just like the case when people shun a rotting corpse and go away from it at a distance because of the foul and loathsome stink emanating from it.

He abandons all the sense objects of this enchanting but entrapping and deluding material world like they were horrible poison though this world is very difficult to eliminate and shun.

{That is, he would have to make conscious effort to renounce this material world. It is a difficult proposition and would require strong will and resolve.}

Chaupai line nos. 9-16 can be summarised as follows:-

“When the Lord God is merciful, he sends a holy cow symboling Satvic (virtuous, auspicious and righteous) qualities to come and reside in the heart of the creature. To wit, the creature begins to inculcate noble virtues in his inner self.

This cow feeds on green rejuvenating herbs represented by such grand qualities as Japa (repetition of holy mantras and the Lord's holy name), Tapa (observe austerity and do penance), Vrat (observe righteous vows), Yam (self-control, non-stealing, non-violence, non-possession etc.), Niyam (observing rules and regulations of a righteous way of life such as devotion and surrender to God, self-discipline, non-attachment, doing good deeds and harbouring good thoughts while keeping away from bad deeds and thoughts etc.), inculcate faith and belief in the Lord, develop renunciation and dispassion towards this mundane world of artificial sense objects, make the mind free from corruptions and negativities, and burn all tainting desires in the fire of selfless service to the Lord. To wit, the creature begins to nourish his ill inner-self gradually with these healthy and rejuvenating virtues. Just like the cow which would produce milk according to the food she eats, the soul too develops a natural inclination based on the virtues that the creature practices in life.

The well-fed cow meets her calf denoted by newly born love and devotion for the Lord God (in the heart of the creature). Then milk begins to flow from her udders—i.e. the virtues stated earlier begin to show positive results when love and devotion for the Lord God sprouts in the heart of the spiritual aspirant.

Now the need arises to milk the cow. So quietude, serenity and poise of mind are used as cords to tie the hind legs of the cow so that she can be milked. A pot of faith is used to collect her milk, and the calmed and controlled mind acts as the person who milks her. {This is because if the mind is not focused on the process of milking the cow, the stream of milk would spill over and go to waste. In other words, a mind that is cool and calm, a mind that thinks rationally and coherently, is absolutely necessary in any endeavour, whether worldly or spiritual.}

The milk is represented by the virtue of great righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety.

Then this milk is boiled properly in the fire represented by the grand virtues of dispassion, detachment, lack of desires and passions. {When the milk is boiled, all its germs are killed. Likewise, when the creature develops these virtues, all his negativities are destroyed.}

This boiled milk is then cooled down by developing the grand virtues of contentedness, forbearance and forgiveness as well as patience and restraint of the mind. {The metaphor is easy to relate to by even an ordinary man. 'Cooling down' is possible only when the mind is not agitated and over-reactive. Even in our day-to-day lives we tell others to 'cool down' when they become agitated and annoyed, and lose their temper.}

The cooling of the milk represents the cooling down of the creature's desires, passions and all other negativities which had earlier kept him on the edge, and this obviously makes him happy and blissful.

This cooled milk should be mixed with a little bit of curd representing the virtues of patience and self-restraint of the mind and the body so that it forms into thick and rich curd representing the glorious virtues of renunciation and detachment from this mundane world.

This curd is then put in a vessel of happiness and cheerfully churned by a churning-rod representing the virtues of contemplation, wisdom, discrimination and deep thought about the reality of everything. The cord or string used to turn the rod is represented by the virtues of truthful and sweet words. This churning produces the purified form of milk in the shape of butter that represents the grand virtue of Vairagya (renunciation and detachment). To wit, the result of all this spiritual effort is the development of the virtue of renunciation and detachment in the heart of the

creature.”]

दो०. जोग अगिनि करि प्रगट तब कर्म सुभासुभ लाइ ।

बुद्धि सिरावै ग्यान घृत ममता मल जरि जाइ ॥ ११७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

jōga agini kari pragaṭa taba karma subhāsubha lā'i.

bud'dhi sirāvai gyāna ghr̥ta mamatā mala jari jā'i. 117 (a).

[Now, having prepared butter symbolising Vairagya, we now learn how it is clarified to produce 'clarified butter' known as 'Ghee'.]

A fire of 'Yoga' (concentration of mind and other faculties of the body; bringing about a concerted effort to coordinate the mind and the functioning of the various organs of perception and action in the body) is then kindled.

This fire is fuelled by all the 'Karmas' (deeds) of the past, whether they are good or bad, that are burnt in it, that are consumed by it.¹

The impurity present in the butter symbolises the negative quality of 'Mamta' (affection, endearment and infatuation with the world and its material charms and things) that a Jiva has in him. This impurity is burnt, i.e. it is removed, with the help of the fire of Yoga that is used to symbolically heat the butter.²

This produces refined butter, or 'clarified butter' known as 'Ghee'. This Ghee symbolises 'Gyan' (knowledge of the truth; realisation and awareness)³.

This Gyan is then further cooled by the application of 'Buddhi' (mind and its faculty of reasoning and reflection known as intellect)⁴. (Doha no. 117-a)

[Note—¹The fire of Yoga kindled by renunciation and dispassion should help the spiritual aspirant to purify his inner self by practicing exemplary self-restraint. The past Karmas (deeds) of a person drive his thought processes, his emotions, his natural tendencies and temperament, his likes and dislikes, as well as his reaction to different situations in his current life. Yoga means to coordinate and bring about a union between two or more things. So, the wise spiritual aspirant coordinates all his efforts to neutralise the different inherent tendencies etc. that he has inherited from his past in order to stabilise himself internally, both at the intellectual level as well as the emotional level. Neither the adversities of the world, the miseries and pains of the world, nor its charms and glamour are able to sway the spiritual aspirant who practices Yoga in the proper way from his chosen path.

²We have already read earlier in the preceding verse no. 16 that this 'butter' itself stands for the great virtue of Vairagya (renunciation). But Vairagya needs to be pure, and not corrupted or diluted with certain taints, and one such factor is 'Mamta' for the world as defined above. So this negativity has to be eliminated to bring the shine out in Vairagya. How is it done? It is done by the means of practicing 'Yoga'.

³In the Upanishads it is affirmed that the result of practicing Yoga is attainment of 'self-realisation' or Gyan. It is a powerful and potent tool that helps the practitioner to clean his self by burning all the spiritual negativities related to the world that cling to him and cloud his inner self in an imperceptible manner. The cleansing process is both external as well as internal. Yoga helps to clog all the nerves and veins in the

body and rejuvenate it—this is external cleaning. It helps one to concentrate his mind and focus it on the goal of life. For spiritual aspirants, Yoga helps them to keep their mind under control, to focus its attention on the truth represented by the pure conscious Atma and wean it away from the falsehood of the world, which in turn helps the practitioner to realise his ‘true self and its potentials’—this is internal awakening.

Once the thick layer of impurities represented by countless negative factors such as Moha, Maya, Trishna etc. that have been listed in the foregoing verses are removed by the practice of Yoga and other observances, the ‘self’ becomes freshened just like a man’s physical body is washed clean of all the dirt that covers it after he bathes, or gets freshened up.

But that is not enough. A man who has just taken a bath is able to clean his body, but if his mind is engulfed in some sort of worries and is torn in dilemmas, can he actually feels fresh and rejuvenated for a sustained period of time by simply taking a bath? Of course not. He needs a calm and poised mind.

Let us understand it by an example. Suppose a man had some great worry weighing on his mind the previous day, and he went to sleep in great depression, his mind heavy and gloomy. He wakes up the next day and takes a bath. He feels energised for a while. But the gloomy thoughts soon overtake him. On the contrary, if he has learnt to exercise control over his mind and emotions, then not only will he feel fresh with a physical bath but would be ready to tackle all the problems with the help of his intellect which is ready to guide him onwards. Surely he will find a way, and even if he doesn’t he still finds peace in his heart and overcome his miseries because he knows the saying that “even this will pass away”, that not everything in life can go according to one’s wish, that the world is a continuous graph of up and down curves in life. So he takes it easy and everything in his stride.

⁴Buddhi or intellect may work in different ways depending upon many factors that come into play. If the intellect is corrupted or polluted by any factor, the person’s decisions and thought processes get distorted to the same extent. So, inspite of realising the false nature of the gross world and that it is like a trap for the Atma, inspite of practicing all the spiritual principles and having developed renunciation towards the world by the knowledge acquired by the study of the scriptures and experienced by spiritual practices, if a person still has a soft corner in his inner heart for the world and its false relationships, thinking that someone is his son or friend, that some or the other thing of the material world belongs to him or had belonged to him some time ago, that he has at least moral right over them, and such other factors that even remotely ties the Jiva to the world—then he cannot be said to have complete and purest form of Vairagya.

Hence, it is necessary to break this know of attachment and affection with the world—i.e. it is imperative to overcome ‘Mamta’.

Once Mamta is done away with, a purified ‘Buddhi’ (intellect) emerges. When this cleansed intellect gives certain advice to the spiritual aspirant, it is a well-considered and expert advice without any extraneous considerations that influence it. It is like the case of a king’s close advisor who is wise and loyal to the king, who gives the best advice to the king that is in the latter’s as well as in the kingdom’s interest. On the contrary, if the king’s advisor is corrupt and under the influence of some one with vested interest, his advice to the king would be distorted and insincere. The poor king depends upon the advisor, not realising that the latter is corrupt. This will be ruinous for the king.

Likewise, the Jiva and his Atma rely on the Buddhi (intellect) to guide them along, and if the Buddhi is corrupted by Mamta (affection and infatuation) for the world, then no matter how hard the Jiva and his Atma have tried to break free from their 'Granthis' or spiritual knots, their efforts would be made null and void by their corrupted advisor, the Buddhi.]

तब बिग्यानरूपिनी बुद्धि बिसद घृत पाइ ।

चित्त दिआ भरि धरै दृढ़ समता दिअटि बनाइ ॥ ११७ (ख) ॥

taba bigyānarūpinī bud'dhi bisada ghr̥ta pā'i.

citta di'ā bhari dharai dr̥ṛha samatā di'aṭi banā'i. 117 (b).

This Buddhi (the intelligent mind which has been freed from all taints and corruptions) is like 'Vigyan' or 'refined intellect'. [That is, it is not sufficient to simply have 'Buddhi' or mind and intellect, but it is more important to have a Buddhi that is refined, that is sharp and of a higher order. Such a Buddhi is known as 'Vigyan'—i.e. a refined intellect that has razor sharp reasoning and ability to analyse things in the correct perspective.]

Thus, the clarified butter known as 'Ghee' that is obtained (by the method outlined in the foregoing verses) symbolises refined 'Buddhi' (mind) known as 'Vigyan' (refined intellect).¹

This symbolic Ghee (clarified butter) is then filled in the symbolic lamp called 'Chitta' (sub conscious mind and faculty of reasoning of the mind).

This lamp is then put on a stand symbolised by the virtues of stability, equanimity, equality and evenness of mind and thought². {If this is not done, the lamp has a chance of toppling over. This means all efforts to light the surroundings will fail as the light of the lamp will go off when it topples over due to the unsteady lamp-stand on which it is kept.} (Doha no. 117-b)

[Note—¹This Doha no. 117-b distinguishes between 'Buddhi' and 'Vigyan'. While the term 'Buddhi' refers to the mind in its basic form with crude intellect, the word 'Vigyan' refers to the refined mind with its refined intellect, a mind that has the ability to do reasoning based on analysis of things in the correct light and perspective, and not a mind that is biased against or in favour of something. Vigyan refers to the reasoning that relies on a mind without any preconceived ideas and notions, a mind that is analytical, prudent, wise and practical.

In other words, the result of practicing Yoga and other spiritual disciplines is to have wisdom and enlightenment. If this is not achieved, the entire exercise is futile. That empirical body of knowledge which stands the test of proof and verification; scientific and logical form of wisdom and relevant knowledge is called Vigyan. When ordinary 'Gyan' is put to test and a rational body of knowledge is arrived at, when it is witnessed or experienced in practical terms, it is known as 'Vigyan'. It is logical derivation, confirmation and affirmation of certain things known in theory and now ratified as the unequivocal truth and the irrefutable fact, reasoned acknowledgement, or actual witness of facts so that there is no doubt or confusion as to their authenticity, veracity and truth. In other words, Vigyan is experimental Gyan, or Gyan put to practice by following the guidelines of Vedant. It is knowledge that can be

empirically proved and logically and intelligently applied [See Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.]

‘Vigyan’ literally means in-depth knowledge of something that comes with analysis of given data by the application of mind, intelligence and rational logic; having in-depth knowledge of any subject; intelligent and rational learning or science of anything which can be verified and applied in practice; any body of knowledge which is empirical, rational, logical, scientific and applicable in practice. Vigyan is the wisdom, erudition and intelligence that is inherent in a man. It is the rational mind that decides what is to be remembered, what is to be thought of, what needs attention and concentration of mind, and what is worthy of paying any attention and thought at all in the first place. This selective aspect of the discriminatory intellect is called Vigyan.

Any body of knowledge is called Vigyan because it is verifiable and derived at by application of intellect and mind free from any pre-conceived notions and beliefs. Consciousness is called Vigyan because it is self-sustained, self-enlightened, self-illuminated, radiant and glorious; it is a fount of genuine and empirical knowledge and awareness, of wisdom and enlightenment. All other entities in this creation have whatever they have because of the potentials and powers bestowed to them by this consciousness. Their very relevance and importance and significance are there because the consciousness has given them this privilege. These entities are nothing else but a marvelous display of the magnificent majesty and potentials of the consciousness. This realisation is called Vigyan because it is based on intelligent and rational application of knowledge and wisdom. It is Vigyan because it is empirical and thoughtful; it is rational and logical; it is truthful, genuine and real. Vigyan refers to a superior body knowledge that is not based on hearsay or conjectures. It has a solid foundation and steady relevance.

Information and knowledge that stand the test of logic and rational is therefore called Vigyan; it is this Vigyan that takes a man forward. With knowledge come joy and happiness, satisfaction and a sense of achievement, elation and a sense of fulfillment. In the spiritual realm, this leads to bliss and self-realisation. This realisation pertains to the awareness of the ‘self’ as the irrefutable, eternal and immutable Atma or soul which is pure consciousness. The macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma is known as Brahm. Hence, self-realisation is equivalent to Brahm realisation.

Consciousness itself implies the truthful knowledge of anything that is real and true, and not that is hypothetical and imaginary. That is why the Atma or soul is called consciousness and a personification of Vigyan.

Purely on technical grounds, the word ‘Gyan’ means gnosis, while ‘Vigyan’ may refer to enlightenment, but in practice both go hand in hand.

Besides this, Vigyan is the progenitor, sustainer and concluder of the entire creation. It is obvious deduction because creation is such a complicated process that it requires exceptional intelligence and skills as well as critical ability to use available information to start, sustain and conclude the tremendous explosive potentials of the forces and energy of Nature for constructive purposes, and to keep a strict tab on it so that it does not digress from its mandate and prove counter-productive. Even during the life of a creature, it needs the help from all fields of knowledge in order to meet its daily needs and provide for its material and bodily comforts and well being.

Information and knowledge that stand the test of logic and rationale is called Vigyan; it is this Vigyan that takes a man forward. With knowledge come joy and happiness, satisfaction and a sense of achievement, elation and a sense of fulfillment.

In the spiritual realm, this leads to bliss and self-realisation. This realisation pertains to the awareness of the irrefutable and immutable Atma or soul which is consciousness. The macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma is known as Brahm. Hence, self-realisation is equivalent to Brahm-realisation.

In short, from conception right up to conclusion creation needs Vigyan at each step of its existence. At the time of death, a wise man benefits from his lifetime of experiences and learning, and detaches himself from this delusory and illusionary world of material objects which are non-eternal and the cause of all miseries because they tend to tie and bog the Atma down to this lowly world of transmigration and prevent its final liberation and attainment of salvation.”

The concept of Vigyan has been elaborately described in (i) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 7; (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 31 and Canto 6, verse no. 68; Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 3, Anuvak 5; and Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 35-39.

Vigyan is defined as an analytical and systematic understanding of anything, a critical study so that the truth hidden behind the external appearances is unraveled and known.]

तीनि अवस्था तीनि गुन तेहि कपास तें काढि ।

तूल तुरीय सँवारि पुनि बाती करै सुगाढ़ि ॥ ११७ (ग) ॥

tīni avasthā tīni guna tēhi kapāsa tēm kāḍhi.

tūla tūrīya samvāri puni bāti karai sugāḍhi. 117 (c).

{This Doha describes how the symbolic wick of the lamp is to be made. Remember: It is the wick that bears the flame; without the wick there will be no light. If light stands for spiritual wisdom and enlightenment, then it is very important to have a well-made wick that would sustain this light.}

To make the wick for the lamp, cotton is needed. This ‘wick’ is symbolised by the transcendental state of existence known as ‘Turiya’, and it is extracted or obtained from a ‘ball of cotton’ consisting of the other three states of existence known as Jagrat, Swapna and Sushupta, as well as the three Gunas known as Sata, Raja and Tama.¹ (Doha no. 117-c)

[Note—¹The ‘wick’ stands erect as opposed to the ‘ball of cotton’. If the fire is applied to the ball of cotton, the latter would burn immediately, but the same fire does not harm the wick but rides on its back.

In other words, the countless temptations and corruptions of the world can easily affect a person while his Atma lives in the three states of existence known as Jagrat, Swapna and Sushupta, or when it is affected by the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama. On the contrary, if the Atma rises above these two combinations of three factors each, then it stands tall and incorruptible. Even the ferocity of the fire can't burn it.

According to metaphysics, there are four states of existence of consciousness. They are known as (i) Jagrat of waking state; (ii) Swapna or dreaming state; (iii) Sushupta or deep sleep state; and (iv) Turiya or the post deep sleep state which is a transcendental state of existence. Beyond this fourth state is the fifth state known as Turiyateet.

Similarly, there are said to be three Gunas or inherent qualities in all living beings which decide each individual's personality and mentality according to the ratio in which they are present in that individual.]

सो०. एहि बिधि लेसै दीप तेज रासि बिग्यानमय ।

जातहिं जासु समीप जरहिं मदादिक सलभ सब ॥ ११७ (घ) ॥

sōraṭhā.

ēhi bidhi lēsai dīpa tēja rāsi bigyānamaya.

jātahirṁ jāsū samīpa jarahirṁ madādika salabha saba. 117 (d).

In the above described way, a wise, erudite and sagacious spiritual aspirant should light the lamp of true knowledge and wisdom from which emanates the brilliant light of enlightenment and self-realisation that is able to immediately burn or destroy all the moths symbolising all sorts of worldly taints such as vanity, ego, haughtiness and arrogance (jarahirṁ madādika salabha saba) that happen to go near him¹. (Sortha no. 117-d)

[Note—¹Doha nos. 117-c and 117-d can be recapitulated as follows:-

“When all Mamta (affections and attachments for the world and its material charms) is done away with, the Jiva is said to have accessed Gyan (wisdom and enlightenment). Slowly when Gyan becomes robust and healthy, the Jiva attains true Vigyan, the higher echelons of enlightenment. This in metaphysical terms means that he enhances his spiritual stature step by step to ultimately attain the state of Turiya, i.e. the state of transcendental existence in which the Jiva lives as pure consciousness that is free from worldly taints and grossness.”]

चौ०. सोहमस्मि इति बृत्ति अखंडा । दीप सिखा सोइ परम प्रचंडा ॥ १ ॥

आतम अनुभव सुख सुप्रकासा । तब भव मूल भेद भ्रम नासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sōhamasmi iti br̥tti akhaṇḍā. dīpa sikhā sō'i parama pracaṇḍā. 1.

āṭama anubhava sukha suprakāsā. taba bhava mūla bhēda bhrama nāsā. 2.

The constant awareness of, and a firm conviction in, the truthfulness of the spiritual wisdom that ‘I am That (Brahm) (sōhamasmi—i.e. there is no distinction between ‘my true self’ which is called my Atma and which is pure consciousness, and Brahm which is the cosmic Consciousness and the ‘Supreme Self’ or the Parmatma of creation) represents the steady and unflickering, dazzling flame of the lamp of wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation. (1)

In this way, when the light of self-realisation illuminates one's inner-self, the darkness symbolising doubts and delusions originating from this gross world of duality would automatically vanish¹. (2)

[Note—¹“The constant thought that ‘I and Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma, are one and non-dual’ represents the light that is brightly lit and emanating from the lamp described above. When this light of self-realisation spreads in the space of the inner-self of the spiritual aspirant, it is only then the darkness represented by Avidya (lack of truthful and correct knowledge; ignorance about the reality) and Moha (infatuations and attachments with this artificial world of delusions) that create the mirage (impression) of ‘duality’ in this world, is eliminated.”

Ghosts and phantoms terrify a person in a dark house, but all such fears vanish if there is constant illumination from a brilliant source of light from a lamp. Likewise, when the light of self-realisation illuminates the inner-self of a creature, the spiritual fears arising out of delusions pertaining to the world do not bother him.

Darkness and illumination cannot co-exist. All perennial doubts and confusions, called various kinds of delusions, pertaining to the reality of existence and the truth of life, about what should be one’s real goal in life, about why one never gets permanent peace and happiness by searching them in the external world and how true peace and comfort can be obtained, about the true identity of one’s own self, whether it is one’s physical body that lives and gets involved in the affairs of the world or is it something else that is separate from the body and hence detached from the world, about why there is so much discord and opposition amongst the creatures of this world, about how to overcome temptations of caused by the false charms of the material world and its sense objects, and many other such spiritual queries that perplex a creature are answered once he becomes enlightened about the basic truth about himself and existence.

This Truth is “*sōhamasmi*” which is one of the main ‘Mahavakyas’ or great spiritual sayings, the maxims and axioms of the Upanishads. It simply means that ‘there is no distinction between the individual’s true self known as the Atma that is pure consciousness and the essence of his being, and the supreme Brahm which is the supreme Atma of creation known as the cosmic Consciousness, and which is the essence of life in this creation’. To wit, the ‘individual living being’ is a microcosmic form of the ‘supreme Being’.

One very essential point to note here is that this wisdom is also called ‘self-realisation’ as one is able to become enlightened about who actually one is. He realises that his ‘true self’ is not his gross physical body which interacts with the world and established relations with its units, but it is the independent Atma. And this Atma is a universal and all-pervading entity that is the same constant denominator in all living beings.

Further, a wise aspirant realises that it is his gross body that does deeds and acts in various ways in this equally gross world, it is this body that suffers or enjoys the consequences of what it does, it is the body that takes birth, grows up and becomes old to die one day, whereas the Atma is an eternal and uniform entity the remains detached from all deeds and therefore immune to all the consequences arising due to these deeds, it neither takes any birth nor dies for it only changes bodies like one changes one’s old clothes to don new ones, and that the Atma is never affected by any of the grossness, faults and taints associated with the mortal world. Whereas the body may feel shortages, misery and pain, the Atma is eternally blissful and contented.

A simple corollary of this wisdom is that the spiritual aspirant is able to understand the truth of the statement that ‘that Lord Ram resides in the subtle heart of his devotees’. This is because Lord Ram is a personified form or an embodiment of

the cosmic Consciousness which is also known as the Supreme Atma or Brahm, and this Atma lives inside the subtle heart of all living beings as their own Atma. By saying that the Lord resides in the subtle heart of ‘his devotees’ it is meant that only those who are self-realised and enlightened about the truth of the wisdom “It is Me/I” and firmly believe in it (i.e. the devotees) are the ones who would understand that Lord Ram lives inside their own inner-self as their Atma in the same way as he exists outside.

Therefore, true worship is to be done internally and not externally. This is the principle of ‘non-duality’ or non-distinction between the self and the supreme Self. Hence, a truly self-realised devotee of Lord Ram becomes a living image of the Lord himself!

For the rest of the creatures, i.e. for those who are not enlightened or ‘true devotees’ as they have not realised the truth of the statement “sōhamasmi”, Lord Ram is a revered deity who needs to be offered worship by so many external ways to please him, and is the Lord who has to be attained by undertaking so many strenuous religious exercises that are characterised by a constant fear of failure and hardships.

Obviously, those who do not believe in “sōhamasmi” cannot find the same level of peace and fulfilment as has been obtained by those who believe in it.]

प्रबल अबिद्या कर परिवारा । मोह आदि तम मिटइ अपारा ॥ ३ ॥

तब सोइ बुद्धि पाइ उँजिआरा । उर गृहँ बैठि ग्रंथि निरुआरा ॥ ४ ॥

prabala abidyā kara parivārā. mōha ādi tama miṭa'i apārā. 3.

taba sō'i bud'dhi pā'i um̐ji'ārā. ura gr̥ham̐ baiṭhi granthi niru'ārā. 4.

With the illumination arising out of self-realisation, the darkness that is associated with the various spiritual faults having their genesis in the powerful forces of ignorance and delusions that create attraction for and infatuation with the gross world (mōha ādi tama) is automatically eliminated. These spiritual faults or shortcomings are not isolated ones but they come in hordes like a family of problems that invade the inner-self of an individual and rob him of all his peace and happiness¹. (3)

When this happens (i.e. when the darkness of ignorance and delusion is removed and fear from the ghosts and phantoms symbolising numerous spiritual faults vanishes), the wisened and polished intellect called ‘Buddhi’ can sit quietly and analytically examine the differences or similarities between the gross and the sublime, between the reality and the falsehood in this world, under the light provided by wisdom of self-realisation, and this helps the Buddhi to untie or unravel the mysteries of all spiritual knots (that had been hitherto worrying the aspirant)². (4)

[Note—¹Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 71-a which describes the family symbolising the evil effects of Kaliyug.

²“In the light of enlightenment and self-realisation, the wisdom and the intellect are able to see or search out the cause of the knot that had tied the creature to this world, and thereby untie the knot, setting the creature free. With the light of enlightenment and self-realisation, the creature is able to see the root cause of his worldly

entanglements and entrapments. These causes are enumerated above in the foregoing verses. Once the cause is known, it becomes easy to untie the knot. Previously it was not possible because the spiritual aspirant couldn't see them in the darkness of ignorance and delusions.”

It is impossible to read or see anything in the dark; a man needs light to do so. A person cannot untie a knot in the dark.

Similarly, if the intellect is clouded by delusions and ignorance then it is not able to properly analyse anything about the existence and its truth, about the causes for the creature's pain and sufferings or happiness and joys. When this cloud is removed then only can it solve this riddle by calmly analysing the data available to it by the creature's own experiences in life in this world.

So therefore, when the light of self-realisation illuminates the inner-self of a spiritual aspirant, and all darkness associated with delusions and ignorance is removed, the Buddhi or the intellect of a person is able to peacefully analyse the world and one's experiences in it. It is then able to unravel the mysteries of life's joys and sorrows, what gives true and sustainable happiness to the creature, and what the causes of his miseries and grief are.

The Buddhi free from the darkness of ignorance and delusions can see properly in the light of true knowledge and wisdom that comes with self-realisation, and this illumination helps it to untie the knot that had confounded the spiritual aspirant about his true self and the reality of existence, as well as about the real source of joy and happiness. The wisened Buddhi helps the aspirant to realise that it makes no sense to be attached with the gross characterised by grief and miseries, and that true happiness and bliss lies elsewhere. When a person himself realises any truth based on his personal experiences he is more inclined to believe in it and be steady in following it as compared to the situation when he hears or reads about the same truth from other sources.]

छोरन ग्रंथि पाव जौं सोई । तब यह जीव कृतारथ होई ॥ ५ ॥

छोरत ग्रंथि जानि खगराया । बिघ्न अनेक करइ तब माया ॥ ६ ॥

chōrana granthi pāva jaum̐ sō'ī. taba yaha jīva kṛtāratha hō'ī. 5.

chōrata granthi jāni khagarāyā. bighna anēka kara'i taba māyā. 6.

If the wisened intellect, the Buddhi, is able to untie the knot of ignorance and delusion, the Jiva (living being) feels glad and fulfilled as it can now hope to realise its spiritual objectives. (5)

But oh the King of Birds (khagarāyā)! The problem is that when Maya (delusions personified) finds that its family members are being chased out of the inner chambers of the heart, it does its best to throw a spanner in the wheel by creating hindrances and making a lot of trouble¹. (6)

[Note—¹As soon as the Buddhi is able to untie the knot of ignorance, the Jiva is full of gratitude. But Maya (the power of delusions) is extremely cunning; as soon as it finds that the Jiva is about to break free, it starts creating countless mischief for him.]

रिद्धि सिद्धि प्रेरइ बहु भाई । बुद्धिहि लोभ दिखावहि आई ॥ ७ ॥
कल बल छल करि जाहिं समीपा । अंचल बात बुझावहिं दीपा ॥ ८ ॥

rid'dhi sid'dhi prēra'i bahu bhā'ī. bud'dhihi lōbha dikhāvahiṁ ā'ī. 7.
kala bala chala kari jāhiṁ samīpā. aṅcala bāta bujhāvahiṁ dīpā. 8.

Oh Brother (bhā'ī)¹! It (the 'Maya') sends many types of 'Riddhis and Siddhis' (temptations and rewards pertaining to the gratification of the senses and material benefits of the world) that try to distract the Buddhi and provoke it to become greedy for the rewards that they dangle before it like a bait. (7)

These Ridhis and Siddhis come in surreptitiously; they adopt all the tricks they know of, using cunning, deceit, conceit, force and fraud to gain entry. Then they approach the Buddhi and extinguish the light of true knowledge and wisdom by fanning the lamp with the end of their garments². (8)

[Note—¹The word 'Bhai' or 'Brother' implies that all the creatures are members of the same family of which the Supreme Being is the Father. This is the way a genuinely self-realised person would address another because he knows that the true identity of both of them is their Atma or soul, and this entity is pure consciousness that is constant, unchanging, universal, and the same in all living beings. The gross bodies of two individuals are different, but their Atma is the same.

'Bhai' is also an affectionate means of address that establishes proximity between the speaker and the listener. Here Kaagbhusund stresses that he has great affection for Garud.

It also means that though Garud is the king of birds', yet when he has come to listen to the glorious story of Lord Ram he is like other ordinary birds who are sitting around to listen to the narration.

²Maya's family consisting of various temptations and rewards come disguised in the form of symbolic whores who are charming and voluptuous by nature. In order to entice the Buddhi to fall in their evil trap, they gesture at it they they would like to tightly embrace it in a warm sensual hug only if they are allowed to put out the light emanating from the lamp of wisdom and enlightenment. So, if the Buddhi is not careful and alert, and if it slips from its chosen path, then the light is shut-off and darkness engulfs the Buddhi once again. If this comes to happen, then all the earlier efforts of the Jiva to get out of the clutches of delusions and ignorance come to a naught.

"Maya sends many temptations in the form of 'Riddhis and Siddhis'—i.e. worldly acclaim, riches, successes and achievements, as well as many mystical powers that make a creature proud of his spiritual achievements and prowess, thereby making him egoistic, proud, haughty and arrogant. They come close to the Jiva by cunning artifice, by hook or by crook, i.e. they employ all cunning and deceitful means, all types of fraud and force at their disposal to deceive the creature and entice him with temptations so that he gets trapped once again. The Maya sways the end of her colourful garment to fan the lamp so that the light of Gyan, Vigyan and Vairagya that had been lit with such diligent effort is put off. This is exactly what Maya wants; she throws the bait and the creature bites it like a greedy fish, a bird and a monkey cited in

the beginning of this narrative. Though on the verge of freedom, the creature gets trapped once again; the light is shut off, and darkness takes hold!”]

होइ बुद्धि जौं परम सयानी । तिन्ह तन चितव न अनहित जानी ॥ ९ ॥
जौं तेहि बिघ्न बुद्धि नहिं बाधी । तौ बहोरि सुर करहिं उपाधी ॥ १० ॥

hō'i bud'dhi jaum parama sayānī. tinha tana citava na anahita jānī. 9.
jaum tēhi bighna bud'dhi nahim bādhī. tau bahōri sura karahim upādhī. 10.

Now, if the Buddhi (representing the wisdom of the Jiva, the living being) is wise and clever, it would see through the nefarious design of the crooked Maya and its messengers, the Riddhis and Siddhis, that have to come to entice it. The Buddhi would realise that they are harmful to its own interest, and so it pays no attention to their overtures; it pays no heed to them and neglects them. (9)

In this way if the Buddhi is able to overcome the hurdles created by its enemy symbolised by the various forms of Maya, then the next obstacle in its spiritual progress is created by the (jealous and selfish) gods who step in to create another sort of problem (sura karahim upādhī)¹. (10)

[Note—¹“But if the Jiva creature is wise and intelligent, he immediately realises the mischief and evil design being played out by this cunning intruder. So he uses the weapon of his intellect to vanquish Maya and retain his ground of self-realisation and enlightenment, thereby being able to retain all the wonderful virtues he has acquired and fostered with such great difficulties. This is first hurdle crossed or overcome. The next obstacle is caused by jealous gods.”]

According to the Aeterya Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Canto 1, Sections 1 and 2, when creation came into being and the living being, the Jiva or creature was created, the different ‘gods’ who represent the different dynamic forces of creation took up their residences in the different organs of the creature’s body. They began to live inside the body of the individual Jiva as it was a microcosmic form of the universe in which the gods used to live. Once they took up their dwelling inside the body of the Jiva, they started controlling his functioning by controlling each of his individual organs of perception and action.

For instance, the ‘god’ who represents the power to ‘see’ took up his residence in the creature’s ‘eyes’. From here this ‘god’ controlled what the creature ‘saw’. Since the mind and sub-conscious rely on the different organs of perception to receive any kind of information pertaining to the external world in which the creature lives so as to decide the course of action that the creature would take, what feedback these organs give to the mind and the sub-conscious would directly affect the decision-making process of the creature and the way it acts in this world.

Thus, even if the mind is pure and un-corrupt as an individual entity, even if the mind alone is wise and enlightened enough to understand the bad effects of Maya vis-à-vis the creature’s spiritual welfare, but when it has to rely on other factors for taking any decision while dealing with the world in which the creature (the Jiva; the living being) has to live as long as the latter has a physical body, the mind is bound to be affected by the information that these organs provide it. These organs are controlled by different ‘gods’, such as the organ of sight known as the ‘eye’ is

controlled by the ‘god of sight’; the ‘nose’ is presided over by the ‘god who controls smell’, and so on.

The mind therefore would be indirectly influenced by the gods who control the different organs of perception and action in the creature’s body. If the gods decide to play cunning tricks and ruin the fate of the otherwise wise, self-realised and enlightened creature, they would tweak and corrupt the information that the relevant organs would pass onto the mind. Since the mind gets a corrupted and tainted form of feedback from the organs of perception and action because the gods presiding over them are crooked and selfish, it (the mind) takes a wrong decision on behalf of the creature. The result is that the innocent creature unwittingly falls in a trap of temptations pertaining to the world and its sense objects, and also becomes a victim of the vicious pull that the sense organs exert on him for self-gratification.

Put simply, if the Jiva is careless and puts down his guard even after he has managed to train his mind and sub-conscious to be spiritually wise and enlightened, there is a grave risk of falling from his chosen path because his own organs betray him and make it difficult for him to maintain his peace.

That is why even ‘Gyanis’, i.e. those who are highly wise, self-realised and enlightened, those who have acquired true knowledge and are aware of the spiritual truth, are prone to fall from their exalted position and lose their high moral stature. It is because though they have fully controlled their mind yet they aren’t able to control their sense organs. They talk to others about spirituality, about the futile nature of this gross mortal world, and about the value of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, but they themselves don’t follow what they preach; they themselves remain neck-deep in worldly affairs and long for worldly things.

What Kaagbhusund means here is that even when the Jiva manages to use his intelligent mind to deflect the effects of Maya, these so-called ‘gods’ take over to trouble him. To wit, even if the Jiva is able to resist the evil effects of delusions and ignorance by acquiring true knowledge and wisdom, the sense organs of perception and action begin to play their own tricks upon him. They join hands to pull the Jiva towards the gross world and its sense objects like a number of iron pieces are pulled towards a strong magnet. This idea is elaborated in the next verses.]

इंद्री द्वार झरोखा नाना । तहँ तहँ सुर बैठे करि थाना ॥ ११ ॥

आवत देखहिं बिषय बयारी । ते हठि देहिं कपाट उघारी ॥ १२ ॥

indrī dvāra jharōkhā nānā. taham̐ taham̐ sura baiṭhē kari thānā. 11.

āvata dēkhahim̐ biṣaya bayārī. tē haṭhi dēhim̐ kapāṭa ughārī. 12.

The Jiva’s home (i.e. the Atma’s abode) is represented by the subtle heart. [The true identity, the true ‘self’ of a Jiva is his Atma or soul which is pure consciousness. This Atma lives in the subtle space of the Jiva’s heart. Hence, the real abode or home of the Jiva is his subtle ‘heart’.]¹

This home has many openings or outlets (windows and doors) symbolised by the different organs of perception and action present in the physical gross body of the Jiva². In each of these openings there sits a god who guards it; each of these organs are the exclusive domain of a particular god who presides over its functioning. (11)

As soon as they observe that the wind of worldly attachments and infatuation (or sensuality) is coming towards the Jiva, they forcibly open the door and window to let it in³. (12)

[Note—¹The Atma or the soul that lives in the heart of an individual sees the outside world through the means of windows represented by the sense organs of the body. These organs have a patron god of their own. These jealous gods sit at the doorway of their respective sense organs, i.e. they control the five organs of perception and the five organs of action. So as soon as they find that the creature has used the weapon of the Buddhi (intellect) to defeat Maya, these gods open the door of the sense organs and allow Maya to enter by the back-door method in the form of attractions for the charms presented by the sense objects of the material world. To wit, if the wise creature is not fooled by Maya directly and prevents himself from falling prey to temptations created by it, the gods take over. In other words, the sense organs through which the living being interacts with the world begin to lure him to their respective objects in the outside world. Herein comes the 'need for self control, and the necessity of self restraint of the body and its organs.

²There are five organs of perception and five organs of action. Eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin are the organs of perception, and hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory are the organs of action. According to Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 1, there are eleven doors of the body. They are the following—two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, navel, anus, genitals and Brahm-randhra which is the hair like slit on the top of the head.

³To wit, the creature finds it almost impossible to resist the temptations of the world and the charms of its material things inspite of the fact that the mind knows that they are ruinous for his welfare. It is just like the case when all the windows and doors of a house are pushed open under the force of the strong wind that accompanies a storm when it hits the building if these windows and doors are not previously shut tight and fastened properly.]

जब सो प्रभंजन उर गृहं जाई । तबहिं दीप बिग्यान बुझाई ॥ १३ ॥

ग्रंथि न छूटि मिटा सो प्रकासा । बुद्धि बिकल भइ बिषय बतासा ॥ १४ ॥

jaba sō prabhanjāna ura grham' jā'ī. tabahim dīpa bigyāna bujhā'ī. 13.
granthi na chūṭi miṭā sō prakāsā. bud'dhi bikala bha'i biṣaya batāsā. 14.

As soon as this strong gust of wind symbolising desires, wants, passions and lusts related to the sense organs and the world of material things manages to enter the heart, it instantly blows out the lamp of wisdom and enlightenment¹. (13)

As a result, on the one hand he is able to untie the knot of delusions and ignorance, and on the other hand the lamp of wisdom and erudition also gets extinguished. In the ensuing darkness, his Buddhi becomes sore bewildered and utterly confused. This leaves the Jiva entangled in a web of spiritual miseries and torments, and grappling and groping in complete spiritual darkness. (14)

[Note—¹As soon as the creature allows himself to be a prey to the temptations of the world and the urges of the sense organs for self-gratification, he loses his mental balance and falls for the trap.

As soon as this wind of worldly charms and attractions enter the heart through the door of the sense organs, it blows off the light of Vigyan (wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation that had led to renunciation, dispassion and detachment) that had been lit (kindled, developed and nurtured for so long) in the heart (inner-self) of the unfortunate creature. Neither is the knot untied, nor is the light of Vigyan allowed to remain lighted. Darkness once again prevails in the heart, and the strong gust of wind representing attractions and charms of the material sense objects of the world begins to make the Buddhi (intellect) confused and restless.”]

इंद्रिन्ह सुरन्ह न ग्यान सोहाई । बिषय भोग पर प्रीति सदाई ॥ १५ ॥

बिषय समीर बुद्धि कृत भोरी । तेहि बिधि दीप को बार बहोरी ॥ १६ ॥

indrinha suranha na gyāna sōhāī. biṣaya bhōga para prīti sadāī. 15.

biṣaya samīra bud'dhi kṛta bhōrī. tēhi bidhi dīpa kō bāra bahōrī. 16.

The sense organs and their presiding gods have an innate hate for Gyan (spiritual wisdom and its attendant virtues of renunciation, detachment, dispassion etc.) because they like enjoying the sensual pleasures and physical comforts (biṣaya bhōga) that are obtained from the sense objects and the gross material things of the world. (15)

The situation is made all the more grave and serious for the creature because even his Buddhi (which could have guarded the creature from falling prey to evil tendencies) has been blinded due to the darkness created by the strong gust of wind symbolising worldly charms and temptations that has managed to blow out the light of the lamp of spiritual wisdom and true knowledge which had been illuminating the inner-self of the creature earlier. [In complete darkness, the creature stumbles and falls repeatedly until he lays prostrate on the ground, injured and wailing. He is unable to get up and find a way out of his predicament. When the mind fails to make the correct decision because it is bombarded by wrong information input from the organs of perception and action, the creature is misled and takes the wrong turn in his life.]¹ (16)

[Note—¹The presiding gods of the sense organs do not like Gyan. The sense organs prefer indulgences in the respective objects in this material world; this is their natural habit. They do not like being restrained and put on leash; they feel suffocated and strangulated. It is like the case of the restless horse which never stands quietly, and is ever anxious to canter away at the first opportunity. Meanwhile, the Buddhi too have been reeling under the impact of Maya that has blown in by the back-door. Say, in this situation, who can light the blown-out lamp again? It is a very precarious condition for the Jiva. There seems to be no hope for him now.

The main idea here is that it is very important for a wise spiritual aspirant to practice self-control over his sense organs as much as it is important for him to inculcate wisdom and excellent virtues, to acquire true knowledge, and to become self-realised and enlightened. Mere wisdom and knowledge won't help if one does not practice self-control and good moral virtues in his life.]

दो०. तब फिर जीव बिबिधि बिधि पावइ संसृति क्लेश ।
हरि माया अति दुस्तर तरि न जाइ बिहगेस ॥ ११८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

taba phiri jīva bibidhi bidhi pāva'i sansṛti klēsa.
hari māyā ati dustara tari na jā'i bihagēsa. 118 (a).

In this unfortunate way (when the light of the lamp of wisdom, self-realisation, enlightenment and truthful knowledge is extinguished due to the causes and in the manner outlined herein above) the Jiva (the living being) is made to suffer the miseries, pains and torments of the cycle of birth and death (because he falls in the trap of delusions and spiritual ignorance).

Oh King of Birds (bihagēsa)! It is indeed true that Lord Hari's formidable powers of creating delusions (hari māyā) in this world are stupendous, and they have astounding potentials. It is indeed intractable and cannot be easily measured and overcome; it is formidable and awesome. (Doha no. 118-a)

कहत कठिन समुझत कठिन साधत कठिन बिबेक ।
होइ घुनाच्छर न्याय जौं पुनि प्रत्यूह अनेक ॥ ११८ (ख) ॥

kahata kaṭhina samujhata kaṭhina sādhat kaṭhina bibēka.
hō'i ghunācchara n'yāya jāum̐ puni pratyūha anēka. 118 (b).

Truthful spiritual wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment (known as Vivek) are very difficult to access and understand, and equally difficult to practice and retain once they are obtained.

It is by a fortunate chance that the creature is able to obtain it by repeated efforts and due diligence just like some figures that are involuntarily made in the wood by the wood-worm that nibble at it constantly (ghunācchara n'yāya jāum̐)¹, it becomes difficult for him to preserve it and persevere in its practice². (Doha no. 118-a)

[Note—¹ "ghunācchara n'yāya": When the wood-worm moves around and eats into the wood of a tree, certain marks or trails are made by it by its constant nibbling of the pith, and it may happen by chance that these marks or trails resemble some kind of object or alphabet of some ancient language. But the worm did not intend to make these marks or leave behind a trail that would imply that the worm was learned and had been writing something in the wood by chiselling into the pith. The wood-worm does not know anything about what kind of art-work it has produced in the wood; the designs that are etched by it in the pith are created by it unknowingly, and it has no awareness of the significance of what it has produced.

Likewise, even if a creature is fortunate to acquire Gyan and Vivek (true wisdom, true knowledge, self-realisation, enlightenment) by diligent pursuit of knowledge and practicing the various methods prescribed in the scriptures to obtain such knowledge, then he is very fortunate to have accessed these virtues. But the creature still remains unaware of their real values, he does not realise the importance

and the value of the treasure-trove of spiritual peace, blessedness and happiness that has been accessed by him. The result is that it is soon lost as it is blown away when the first gust of wind representing worldly temptations and delusions touches the creature. Hence, the signs that the creature has acquired Gyan and Vivek are wiped off soon like marks made on sand.

²To summarise, this Doha can be read as follows:- “In this way when the light of the lamp of Gyan is blown out, the Jiva is subjected to innumerable miseries that are typical to the cycle of birth and death. The Maya of Hari is extremely difficult to overcome; it is formidable and awesome. ‘Gyan’ is difficult to explain, difficult to understand, and equally difficult to be used as a means of spiritual attainment. If by good chance one is able to acquire Gyan, then it becomes difficult to protect it and sustain it, because there are countless hurdles in its path and many an insurmountable obstacles that are more intractable than anything else one has encountered in life.”]

चौ०. ग्यान पंथ कृपान कै धारा । परत खगेस होइ नहिं बारा ॥ १ ॥
जो निर्बिघ्न पंथ निर्बहई । सो कैवल्य परम पद लहई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gyāna pantha krpāna kai dhārā. parata khagēsa hō'i nahim bārā. 1.
jō nirbighna pantha nirbahaī. sō kaivalya parama pada lahaī. 2.

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa—i.e. Garud)! The path of Gyan (wisdom and knowledge) is like a double-edged sword. It is a very difficult path, and it does not take long for a spiritual aspirant to fall (or slip and commit errors) and get injured (or harmed) in this path. (1)

Only those who can endure the immense difficulties and great hurdles that are natural in this path, and can follow it successfully to the destination it leads, become eligible to attain the spiritually exalted stature of ‘Kaivalya’, the spiritual state of existence that is one of its only kind, is the most exalted and the best, and which entails attainment of oneness between the Atma of the creature and the Parmatma or the Supreme Being who represents the cosmic Consciousness¹. (2)

[Note—¹It is known as ‘Moksha’—the final emancipation and salvation of the soul. It is the ultimate destination for the soul when the cycle of birth and death stops for it. In this state, the individual’s consciousness merges and becomes one with and indistinguishable from the cosmic Consciousness.

To wit, the path of acquisition of true spiritual knowledge that leads to self-realisation, wisdom and enlightenment is a very difficult path and requires a lot of strenuous effort to travel. The chances of falling on the wayside are strong, and the rate of success is very low. The incumbent dangers of this path are like a two-edged sword because a slight carelessness leads to horrifying consequences for the spiritual aspirant. Even a small error on the part of the spiritual aspirant can upset all the efforts that has made for long in order to attain his objectives. The risks are too many and chances of failure are too high to be neglected.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 45.

However, there is a simpler way for the aspirant to attain his spiritual objectives. This way is outlined herein below in next set of verses.]

अति दुर्लभ कैवल्य परम पद । संत पुरान निगम आगम बद ॥ ३ ॥

राम भजत सोइ मुकुति गोसाईं । अनइच्छित आवइ बरिआई ॥ ४ ॥

ati durlabha kaivalya parama pada. santa purāna nigama āgama bada. 3.
rāma bhajata sō'i mukuti gōsā'īm. ana'icchita āva'i bari'ā'īm. 4.

But attainment of the supreme state of existence known as the 'Kaivalya Param Pada' is not an easy spiritual goal to achieve; it is extremely difficult and rare for one to successfully achieve this state of existence. This is what great saints, the Purans, the Vedas and the Tantras (i.e. the primary scriptures) say. (3)

Oh Lord ("gōsā'īm"—i.e. Garud)! That same rarest-of-rare and most difficult state of existence which is equivalent to the final liberation and deliverance of the creature from the cycle of birth and death, which also means emancipation and salvation of the creature's soul (sō'i mukuti), is easily attained without any especial effort or undertaking strenuous exercises by simply worshipping Lord Ram, and having devotion and affection for the Lord. (4)

[Note—¹“The great saints and sages (those who are wise and experienced in this matter), the Purans and the Vedas (the primary scriptures), as well as the rest of the scriptures (the secondary scriptures) affirm unanimously that the attainment of the exalted spiritual stature of 'Kaivalya' is extremely difficult and riddled with difficulties. But the same 'Mukti' (beatitude, the final emancipation and salvation of the soul that is known as Kaivalya) is attainable automatically, without facing any difficulties or making any special efforts to acquire it due to the grace of Lord Ram which comes when one sincerely worships the Lord and has developed profound devotion and deep affection for him. Put simply it means that the best kind of spiritual state of existence marked by the highest form of beatitude and bliss, and the best spiritual goal of the soul to obtain its emancipation and salvation are obtained when one adopts the path of 'Bhakti' instead of pursuing the path of 'Gyan'. It is true that Gyan is very powerful and potent, but it is like a male who can be seduced by a cunning woman. On the contrary, Bhakti is like a soft-hearted and kind woman who cannot be seduced by another woman no matter how cunning she might be!”]

The term 'Kaivalya Pada' literally means the 'only one state of existence when there is non-duality between any two entities'. It is a unique non-dual state of existence when the individual Jiva, the living being, obtains oneness with the Supreme Being; it is the ultimate state of supreme blessedness, beatitude and felicity; it is the attainment of emancipation and salvation; it is the final liberation and deliverance of the soul.

It envisions the merger of the 'self', the individual creature's Atma or soul, with the supreme 'Self' or the Supreme Soul known as the Supreme Brahm or the Supreme Being. This means that all distinctions between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm are erased, and they become one. This translates into freeing the creature from taking birth again and again. Refer: Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 108-109 of Krishna Yajur Veda.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36; (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 57; (iii) Doha no. 78—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 79.

How attainment of the supreme state of blessedness, blissfulness and beatitude is not possible without having devotion for Lord Ram has been explained in the verses that follow herein below.]

जिमि थल बिनु जल रहि न सकाई । कोटि भाँति कोउ करै उपाई ॥ ५ ॥

तथा मोच्छ सुख सुनु खगराई । रहि न सकइ हरि भगति बिहाई ॥ ६ ॥

jimi thala binu jala rahi na sakā'ī. kōṭi bhāmṭi kō'u karai upā'ī. 5.

tathā mōccha sukha sunu khagarā'ī. rahi na saka'i hari bhagati bihā'ī. 6.

Oh the King of Birds (khagarā'ī)! Listen. Even as it is not possible to keep or hold liquid water dangling in mid air in space, for water needs the support of solid ground to stay at a particular point or level, so it is also impossible to sustain the feeling of supreme bliss, blessedness and beatitude that is attained when one accesses the Kaivalya Pada (oneness of the 'self' with the 'supreme Self'; oneness of the Atma with the Parmatma) without having devotion and affection (Bhakti) for Lord Ram, no matter how hard one tries to do so, or how many countless devices he devises to do it.¹ (5-6)

[Note—¹To wit, just as it is impossible that water can stay anywhere if there is no solid ground to support it no matter how hard a person tries to do so, because a liquid needs a hard surface for support, the beatitude and bliss experienced when the creature attains the highest state of oneness with the Supreme Being is not sustainable without the ground support of devotion for the same Supreme Being in his form known as Lord Ram.

It is impossible for water to stay hanging or dangling in mid air; it will stay at a particular point or level only if there is solid ground below it. Likewise, the state of supreme blissfulness, the exalted state of blessedness, felicity and beatitude is sustainable only if the living being has devotion and affection for Lord Ram. Otherwise it would be a transient affair with a temporary sense of spiritual joy that would dissipate sooner or later.]

अस बिचारि हरि भगत सयाने । मुक्ति निरादर भगति लुभाने ॥ ७ ॥

भगति करत बिनु जतन प्रयासा । संसृति मूल अबिद्या नासा ॥ ८ ॥

asa bicāri hari bhagata sayānē. mukti nirādara bhagati lubhānē. 7.

bhagati karata binu jatana prayāsā. sansṛti mūla abidyā nāsā. 8.

Realising the stupendous spiritual value of Bhakti vis-à-vis Mukti (i.e. blissfulness and blessedness attained by having devotion for Lord God or Lord Ram, as compared to attaining the same state of blissfulness and blessedness by other means such as acquisition of knowledge and wisdom leading to self-realisation, or doing sacrifices,

penances, austerities, meditation, reflection, contemplation etc.), those who are really clever, sagacious, erudite, intelligent and wise (*sayānē*) prefer Bhakti and become an ardent devotees of Lord Hari instead of opting for Mukti which they prefer to spurn and cast aside¹. (7)

By following the path of Bhakti one is easily able to destroy or eliminate the root cause of all spiritual problems arising out of delusions and ignorance of the Truth (*abidyā*) that leads the creature to fall in the cycle of birth and death with its endless chain of miseries, pain, grief and torments². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, those who have understood the importance of Bhakti for Lord God as a means to attain their spiritual goal, they would shun all other means to achieve it.

Lord Ram has himself emphasised the supremacy of Bhakti over Gyan in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 45.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 118 which also refers to the presence of 'avidya' or spiritual ignorance that traps the in the vortex of sufferings and miseries.]

भोजन करिअ तृपिति हित लागी । जिमि सो असन पचवै जठरागी ॥ ९ ॥

असि हरिभगति सुगम सुखदाई । को अस मूढ़ न जाहि सोहाई ॥ १० ॥

bhōjana kari'a tr̥piti hita lāgī. jimi sō asana pacavai jaṭharāgī. 9.
asi haribhagati sugama sukhadāī. kō asa mūṛha na jāhi sōhāī. 10.

It is just like the case of one eating food to satisfy his hunger and deriving pleasure from its taste, but that food quietly, imperceptibly and unconsciously nourishes the body when it is digested in the stomach by the warm gastric juices that are active there¹. (9)

Say, who is so stupid and dumb that this path of Bhakti that is so easy and convenient, so comfortable and enjoyable, would not appeal to him²? (10)*

[Note—¹In a similar way, the path of Bhakti is very easy and enjoyable so much so that one can follow it effortlessly and without worrying about encountering problems. One derives a lot of pleasure by having Bhakti. It is not a dry or abstract path like the path of Gyan which entails acquisition of true knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment that leads to self-realisation. This path of Gyan is fraught with immense difficulties and numerous hurdles, and chances of success are low.

So therefore, by following the path of Bhakti one is able to attain his spiritual goals even while enjoying the journey. This is because Bhakti is naturally empowered to bless the aspirant with spiritual happiness, bliss and beatitude. It is also dear to Lord Ram, and the Lord takes care of all who prefer Bhakti over Gyan.

On the other hand, the spiritual path of Gyan is strenuous, tedious and cumbersome with so many strict vows and duties and observances to be followed that it becomes more of a burden for a creature than something one gladly looks forward to do. Gyan is like a strong male who when befriended can be of immense help and

support to a person, but if the same male partner becomes angry due to some reason whatsoever then he creates a great many problems for the person.

²Who would not like to reach his destination by following a path that is straight and enjoyable, and free from troubles, uncertainties and hazards? Who would like to follow an alternate route that is very long, most difficult to traverse, and riddled with uncertain problems?

*Therefore, those who are wise and intelligent prefer to have Bhakti instead of Mukti. This is because if one has Bhakti, the best form of Mukti that is known as 'Kaivalya' would be easily available. It must be noted that the term 'Mukti' does not necessarily mean Kaivalya, as there are many kinds of Muktis, which broadly mean freedom—such as Jivan Mukti, Videha Mukti, Mukti from worldly problems, Mukti from bodily sufferings, Mukti from bondages etc. But these do not necessarily mean spiritual Mukti of the highest kind—it is called the Kaivalya Mukti. This sort of Mukti is attained by two paths—one is the path of Gyan, and the other is the path of Bhakti. As outlined above, the wise ones choose the latter over the former—i.e. they prefer Bhakti over Gyan. Once Bhakti comes, Kaivalya Mukti is on its way automatically.

The benefit of following the path of Bhakti is that the basis of all spiritual ailments, such as remaining trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death in this mortal world, which is 'Avidya' (lack of correct spiritual knowledge), gets automatically eliminated, without making any special effort for getting rid of it, just like the case of one eating some delicious food to quench his hunger or for taste but as soon as the food enters the body it begins to get digested because the digestive fire burning inside the body is triggered automatically on its own, and digests the food silently without making it known to the eater. Say, is a man not a dumb fool if this miraculous Bhakti does not find favour with him?]

दो०. सेवक सेव्य भाव बिनु भव न तरिअ उरगारि ।

भजहु राम पद पंकज अस सिद्धांत बिचारि ॥ ११९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

sēvaka sēbya bhāva binu bhava na tari'a uragāri.

bhajahu rāma pada pañkaja asa sid'dhānta bicāri. 119 (a).

Oh the enemy of serpents ("uragāri"—i.e. Garud)! Unless one develops the attitude of submission and loyalty towards Lord Ram like a loyal and faithful servant has for his benevolent master and lord, thereby thinking "I am a humble servant of my Lord, and I will serve him with utmost devotion, sincerity and faith", it is not possible to cross the mighty ocean symbolised by the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world.

Keeping this principle in mind, you (Garud) must worship Lord Ram and have single-minded devotion for him. (Doha no. 119-a)

जो चेतन कहँ जड़ करइ जड़हि करइ चैतन्य ।

अस समर्थ रघुनायकहि भजहिं जीव ते धन्य ॥ ११९ (ख) ॥

jō cētana kaham'jara kara'i jara'hi kara'i caitan'ya.
asa samartha raghunāyakahi bhajahim jīva tē dhan'ya. 119 (b).

The Lord who is so stupendously mighty and powerful, the Lord who possesses such astounding mystical powers that he can transform inanimate entities into animate entities, and vice versa—those Jivas (creatures; living beings) who worship such a majestic Lord as Sri Raghunayak (“raghunāyaka”—the Great King of the descends of king Raghu of Ayodhya) are indeed and without any gainsay most fortunate and blessed.¹ (Doha no. 119-b)

[Note—¹To wit, it is just not possible to get across this vast ocean represented by the world of transmigration if one does not become firmly convinced of the eclectic view ‘I am a humble servant, and the Lord God is the one whom I serve’. So therefore, be firmly established in this view-point, and have steady and robust devotion and affection in the holy feet of Lord Ram. Those Jivas (living beings) who worship and have devotion for Lord Ram—the almighty Lord of creation who can turn the inanimate entities into animate entities, and vice versa—are indeed most fortunate and blessed.]

चौ०. कहेउँ ग्यान सिद्धांत बुझाई । सुनहु भगति मनि कै प्रभुताई ॥ १ ॥
राम भगति चिंतामनि सुंदर । बसइ गरुड़ जाके उर अंतर ॥ २ ॥
परम प्रकास रूप दिन राती । नहिं कछु चाहिअ दिआ घृत बाती ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

kahē'um' gyāna sid'dhānta bujhāī. sunahu bhagati mani kai prabhutāī. 1.
rāma bhagati cintāmani sundara. basa'i garuṛa jākē ura antara. 2.
parama prakāsa rūpa dina rātī. nahim kachu cahi'a di'ā ghr̥ta bātī. 3.

In the forgoing discourse I have elucidated at length to you about the principles governing Gyan (esoteric knowledge pertaining to the mysteries of the soul, and how to attain liberation and deliverance as well as beatitude through this path; gnosis).

Now listen carefully about the profound glories, the stupendous spiritual powers, and the magnificent virtues and importance of Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) which is like a priceless Gem. (1)

Oh Garud! Lord Ram's Bhakti (having devotion, affection, love, faith, belief in the Lord; submission and surrender before him; serving him selflessly) is like a Gem known as ‘Chintaamani’—a magical and priceless self-illuminated gem that removes all sorts of worries and miseries of a person who possesses it.

Any person's heart where it (‘the priceless gem symbolising the eclectic spiritual virtue of Bhakti’) is found --- (2)

--- is well illuminated day and night. This mystically empowered Gem is self-illuminated, and so it does not need a lamp, ghee (clarified butter) or a wick to keep it lighted with a fluorescent shine¹. (3)

[Note—¹If Bhakti resides in the heart of a person then there is constant illumination in it. There is no chance of darkness symbolising delusions and its attendant spiritual problems, or the myriad forms of worldly worries and sufferings that normally overwhelm a person, to ever find a foothold and give trouble to him.

He is freed from all fears and worries about the fate and destiny of his soul. Any person who has given Bhakti a chance to find a permanent place in his heart does not have to worry about his spiritual well-being any longer, as this now becomes the responsibility of Lord Ram to whom Bhakti is dedicated. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43.

Unlike the illumination of spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation that Gyan produces, for which butter, lamp and wick are needed, i.e. for which many virtuous qualities are needed to be inculcated and carefully nurtured as outlined in the foregoing verses, the illumination produced by Bhakti is self-created; it is an incandescent light that does not need any external aid to illuminate the inner-self of the Jiva.

The sacred, divine and holy story of Lord Ram, known as the “Ram Charit Manas” has also been compared to the Chintaamani gem in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.

The verses herein below outline some of the benefits that accrue to a person who has Bhakti dwelling in his heart.]

मोह दरिद्र निकट नहिं आवा । लोभ बात नहिं ताहि बुझावा ॥ ४ ॥
 प्रबल अबिद्या तम मिटि जाई । हारहिं सकल सलभ समुदाई ॥ ५ ॥
 खल कामादि निकट नहिं जाहीं । बसइ भगति जाके उर माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

mōha daridra nikaṭa nahim āvā. lōbha bāta nahim tāhi bujhāvā. 4.
 prabala abidyā tama miṭi jāī. hārahim sakala salabha samudāī. 5.
 khala kāmādi nikaṭa nahim jāhīm. basa'i bhagati jākē ura māhīm. 6.

Once this wonderful Gem is placed in the treasury (heart) of one's inner-self, poverty symbolised by 'Moha' (worldly attractions, attachments and infatuation) does not torment him.

[This is because this Gem inherently possesses the power to remove poverty of all kinds. Whereas an ordinary Gem found in this world would remove sufferings arising out of lack of wealth and material things, the Gem in the form of Bhakti removes all sorts of spiritual troubles and worries of the devotee. 'Moha' is the root cause for all miseries and grief arising out of the various relationships that a creature establishes with the material, gross and perishable world. Bhakti diverts the attention of the creature from the illusive charm and false happiness that he thinks he would get in this mortal world of perishable things, the reason why he is attracted to the world and gets infatuated with it, to the world of eternal spiritual peace and happiness as well as contentedness that he gets by worshipping and having love and devotion for Lord Ram, the Supreme Being in a manifested form.

To wit, the bearer of this Gem does not have to suffer from the dearth of any 'spiritual riches' in the form of beatitude, blessedness, bliss, peace, happiness and contentedness in his life.]

The light that naturally emanates from this mystical Gem cannot be extinguished by the gust of wind represented by 'Lobha' (greed and temptations of

the material sense objects of the world and the desire of the sense organs for gratification).

[This is because the light symbolising spiritual peace, beatitude, blessedness, bliss, happiness and contentedness that emanates from this mystical Gem known as ‘Bhakti’ comes from within it; it is self-generated. Therefore it needs no protection. It is also not like the light emanating from another Gem known as ‘Gyan’ because this latter Gem needs great care and constant polishing by way of following many strict spiritual observances and diligent practices to maintain its shine.

Hence, the Gem representing ‘Bhakti’ is not affected by any external factor like the case of an ordinary oil lamp whose light can be extinguished if there is a strong gust of wind, or the Gem known as ‘Gyan’ that needs constant care to maintain its brilliant shine for otherwise it would become dull and lustreless.] (4)

In the eternal light shining from this self-illuminated Gem of Bhakti, the darkness symbolising the powerful effects of ‘Avidya’ (ignorance that gives rise to delusions and its innumerable problems; lack of Vidya; lack of true and correct spiritual knowledge) is automatically eliminated.

[This is because ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ can’t co-exist. The light of Bhakti dispels the overpowering fear arising out of ignorance and delusions that are like the darkness of night when one is overcome with the horrifying prospects of having to face so many ghosts and phantoms representing countless miseries, grief and torments associated with the mortal life in this gross world of transmigration.]

Hordes of moths representing the many sensual pleasures and material charms of this world fail to extinguish this light of Bhakti by attacking it from all sides.

[Moths are attracted in droves by the flame of a lamp. They crowd around it in such huge numbers that they create a virtual blanket around the flame and suffocate it; they also jump in the flame in hordes, resulting in the flame flickering and dying away gradually. In this metaphor, the countless sensual pleasures and material charms of the world fail to disturb the inner peace and happiness of a person who has devotion for Lord God in his heart.] (5)*

Other insects representing ‘Kaam’ (lust, passion, longing) and other such wicked tormentors of the soul also aren’t able to go near the person who has Bhakti enshrined in his heart.

[A comprehensive list of tormentors of the creature and how they trouble him is given in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72.] (6)*

[Note—*The self-effusing light from this Gem helps to eliminate the darkness created by Avidya. The irritating group of insects represented by such negativities as Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, pride and vanity) etc. fail to disturb the Jiva and dirty the environs of the Gem. In the case of an oil lamp, the insects are attracted to its light in their hordes, dance around its flame, get burnt, and die, littering the area around the flame and the lamp. Sometimes it often also happens that they die and fall in the oil and cover its surface with their carcasses, thereby suffocating the wick of its space and the flame of its air, and this result in the flame gradually dying away. In the case of the Gem no such thing can happen because there is no physical flame to attract the insects.

The net effect is that the person in whose heart Bhakti resides, the evil-mongering wicked fellows such as Kaam (worldly passions), Krodha (anger, wrath, fury), Lobha (greed) and their like, do not dare to come near him.]

गरल सुधासम अरि हित होई । तेहि मनि बिनु सुख पाव न कोई ॥ ७ ॥
ब्यापहिं मानस रोग न भारी । जिन्ह के बस सब जीव दुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

garala sudhāsama ari hita hō'ī. tēhi mani binu sukha pāva na kō'ī. 7.
byāpahim mānasa rōga na bhārī. jinha kē basa saba jīva dukhārī. 8.

For a person who has this Gem in the form of Bhakti in his heart, a poison turns into nectar, and an enemy or someone who harbours animosity towards becomes a friend.

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, no one can find true happiness, peace, bliss and contentedness without having this miraculous Gem. (7)

Again, such a fortunate person never suffers from any of the grievous emotional problems and spiritual woes known as 'Manas Roga' ("mānasa rōga"—literally meaning mental diseases arising out of emotional disturbances)¹ from which countless creatures suffer interminably. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 121 where Garud has asked Kaagbhusund to tell him what are the Manas Rogas; and from Chaupai line no. 28 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Doha no. 122-a where Kaagbhusund has described this spiritual disease to Garud along with its remedy.]

राम भगति मनि उर बस जाकें । दुख लवलेस न सपनेहुँ ताकें ॥ ९ ॥
चतुर सिरोमनि तेइ जग माहीं । जे मनि लागि सुजतन कराहीं ॥ १० ॥

rāma bhagati mani ura basa jākēm. dukha lavalēsa na sapanēhum' tākēm. 9.
catura sirōmani tē'i jaga māhīm. jē mani lāgi sujatana karāhīm. 10.

Anyone in whose subtle heart dwells the Gem representing Bhakti for Lord Ram, such a person can never suffer from a trace of grief, misery and torment of any kind even in his dream¹. (9)

Therefore, a person is said to be sagacious, erudite, wise and intelligent if he makes an auspicious and all-out diligent effort to acquire this priceless spiritual Gem, and then carefully stores it or enshrines it in the treasury of his heart.

[To wit, a person who makes diligent effort to acquire this Gem of Bhakti is deemed to be the most wise, clever, intelligent and fortunate amongst all men.] (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 122 where a similar idea is expressed.]

सो मनि जदपि प्रगट जग अहई । राम कृपा बिनु नहिं कोउ लहई ॥ ११ ॥
सुगम उसाय पाइबे केरे । नर हतभाज्य देहिं भटभेरे ॥ १२ ॥

sō mani jadapi pragata jaga ahaī. Rāma kṛpā binu nahim kō'u lahaī. 11.
sugama upāya pā'ibē kērē. Nara hatabhāgya dēhim bhaṭabhērē. 12.

Though the astounding spiritual value and magnificent glory of this Gem (Bhakti) is so obvious in this world, yet one is not able to access or acquire it without the grace of Lord Ram.

[This Gem known as 'Bhakti' is not like some precious jewel of this material world that one can find by making concerted effort to acquire it. This Bhakti can only be accessed if Lord Ram shows his grace and kindness upon a seeker.] (11)*

Fortunately, the ways and means to access this valuable Gem are also very easy, but the irony is that those who are unlucky and ill-fated fail to employ these opportunities and remain deprived of this priceless jewel¹. (12)*

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131 where sage Valmiki has listed the many easy ways by which one can develop Bhakti for Lord Ram; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36 where Lord Ram has outlined to Sabari the simple ways to obtain Bhakti; (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45; and Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it where Lord Ram has outlined the simple ways to obtain Bhakti to the citizens of Ayodhya.

*All said and done, this Gem is accessible only when Lord Ram becomes graceful and favourable upon the devotee. This too is very easy (because the Lord is gracious and merciful and obliging by nature, and a simple request or prayer is sufficient to make the Lord grant this Gem to the devotee), but the irony is that still the unfortunate man rejects it. In the absence of true knowledge and awareness of who Lord Ram is, the ignorant man thinks that he is submitting himself to heresy, and prefers to follow the troublesome and arduous path of Gyan in his endeavour to seek Mukti for himself.]

पावन पर्वत बेद पुराना । राम कथा रुचिराकर नाना ॥ १३ ॥
ममी सज्जन सुमति कुदारी । ग्यान बिराग नयन उरगारी ॥ १४ ॥

pāvana parbata bēda purānā. rāma kathā rucirākara nānā. 13.
marmī sajjana sumati kudārī. gyāna birāga nayana uragārī. 14.

[Using symbols from Nature, Kaagbhusund says—] The scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the sacred mountains (because they are enormous in their size). The many enchanting stories and fascinating events associated with the life and time of Lord Ram are like the many mines and caves (of precious stones) that are found on these mountains. (13)*

Saints and devotees are the people who know the secret of these mines and caves, and how to extract the precious gems hidden in them (like expert mineralogists do).

A wise mind and its intelligence are like the sharp pickaxe that is used to dig out the precious gems (representing spiritual rewards that are got by a person who pursues Bhakti).

Gyan (true and analytical knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) are the two eyes of such saints and devotees (who are like the mineralogists)¹. (14)*

[Note—*The scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the holy Mountains; the divine story of Lord Ram, with its numerous versions and interpretations, are like the numerous mines (caves) in them (where spiritual secrets lie hidden and buried); the many sages and saints are the wise ones who know about them and their sacred location (i.e. they can unravel the mysteries of the story and explain them to the eager hearer); and the wise intellect and mind are like the spade, the shovel and the pick-axe which are to be used to unearth the gems hidden in them (i.e. to unravel the holiness, the divinity and spiritual message contained in the story of Lord Ram).

The two eyes needed to see this treasure are represented by the twin virtues of Gyan and Vairagya. One must have a deep and penetrating intellect to understand the import of the message contained in the divine story, and he must have the virtue of renunciation and detachment from this world so that he can concentrate upon benefiting from this knowledge without getting constantly distracted and disturbed by the tug and pull of the mundane world.

¹To wit, in order to mine the spiritual treasure represented by Bhakti, one must have the two indispensable virtues of 'Gyan' and 'Vairagya'. Just like a blind person who stumbles and falls repeatedly, and it becomes too difficult for him to reach his destination, a spiritual aspirant who has no Gyan and Vairagya in him also finds it virtually impossible to access Bhakti that would grant him sustainable spiritual blessedness, beatitude, felicity, bliss, happiness, contentedness etc, as well as liberation and deliverance from all sorts of worldly sufferings that come naturally with Bhakti.

In the absence of Gyan and Vairagya, even if a person manages to find the Gem known as Bhakti, it would be too hard for him to protect it just like a blind man who may have a priceless gem in his possession but would not be able to protect it from thieves or even his jealous friends who are envious of his good fortune.

This observation is extremely significant in the context of earlier statements where it was said that Gyan is very cumbersome and one should try to steer clear of it. But by likening Gyan as one of the eyes of a wise spiritual seeker of Bhakti, its importance and value is established beyond doubt. In fact, 'Gyan' is one of the two main tools for accessing Bhakti, the other being 'Vairagya'. It is stressed here that Gyan plays an important role in one's spiritual welfare, and it should not be overlooked or undermined or neglected while one pursues Bhakti.

This is because without having true knowledge, enlightenment and wisdom, Bhakti becomes a blind pursuit. Like a blind man groping in the dark to reach his destination, and even if he manages to find what he has been searching for he is not sure of what he has found, a person who does not know his spiritual goal or whom he is worshipping, if he worships some God just because others are doing it, he is bound to falter easily and overcome with doubts and uncertainties when confronted by some fact that is beyond his understanding.

The simplest example we have is that of Garud himself in this Ramayan. He is an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu as he is the Lord's vehicle, his mount, but he too was overcome with doubt about the reality of Lord Ram, which led him to Kaagbhusund and listen to the story of Lord Ram and told about the truth of the Lord's actual identity. After having Gyan, or true knowledge of who the Lord was, Garud's doubts and confusions vanished. So the importance of 'Gyan' as an instrument to reinforce Bhakti cannot be underestimated.

Similarly, 'Vairagya' is essential for Bhakti to take a firm root in the heart of the devotee. A person can do one thing at a time; otherwise he would be too distracted to focus on his goal if he tries many things at the same time. If the mind and the heart of a spiritual aspirant are distracted by the countless temptations from the material objects of the world, if the aspirant fails to practice renunciation and detach himself from the world, he won't be able to focus on his actual goal of attaining spiritual blessedness. It is just like a college student or a researcher in an university who does not focus on his studies and wastes his time in worthless indulgences. Either he would fail his exams or pass with a very dismal grade.]

भाव सहित खोजइ जो प्रानी । पाव भगति मनि सब सुख खानी ॥ १५ ॥
मोरें मन प्रभु अस बिस्वासा । राम ते अधिक राम कर दासा ॥ १६ ॥

bhāva sahita khōja'i jō prānī. pāva bhagati mani saba sukha khānī. 15.
mōrēm mana prabhu asa bisvāsā. rāma tē adhika rāma kara dāsā. 16.

A man who searches for this Gem known as Bhakti with due sincerity and devotion (commitment and diligence) is sure to find it. This Gem is a treasury that is full of all happiness and joy for him; it is a giver of all happiness and joy to him. [To wit, Bhakti grants bliss, beatitude, felicity and blessedness to its adherents. It grants to its followers liberation and deliverance from all miseries and sufferings. It bestows emancipation and salvation to the soul.] (15)

In my (Kaagbhusund's) view, the devotee of Lord Ram is superior to the Lord himself¹. (16)

[Note—¹Refer also to Tulsidas' Book of Wisdom, known as 'Dohawali', verse nos. 473 and 528 where also it is said that a devotee of the Lord is more important than the Lord himself.]

राम सिंधु घन सज्जन धीरा । चंदन तरु हरि संत समीरा ॥ १७ ॥
सब कर फल हरि भगति सुहाई । सो बिनु संत न काहूँ पाई ॥ १८ ॥
अस बिचारि जोइ कर सतसंगा । राम भगति तेहि सुलभ बिहंगा ॥ १९ ॥

rāma sindhu ghana sajjana dhīrā. candana taru hari santa samīrā. 17.
saba kara phala hari bhagati suhāī. sō binu santa na kāhūṁ pāī. 18.
asa bicāri jō'i kara satasaṅgā. rāma bhagati tēhi sulabha bihaṅgā. 19.

If Lord Ram is the ocean, then the wise men (who are devoted to him and possess the Gem of Bhakti) are like the rain-bearing clouds¹.

In the same way, if Lord Hari is like the tree of sandalwood, the saints and sages are like the gust of soft wind (that takes the sweet fragrance of the sandalwood and helps to spread it far and wide)². (17)

Bhakti is the best fruit of all spiritual endeavours, and no one can get it (recognize this fruit amongst the cluster of so many assorted fruits or rewards) without the help of saints and sages who help a person to recognise the true rewards that come by following the path of Bhakti. (18)

Realising the importance of saints and other wise ones in the effort to attain the Gem of Bhakti, anyone who seeks such exalted souls and establishes communion with them is easily able to acquire the Gem of Bhakti of Lord Ram³. (19)

[Note—¹The ocean is full of water, but it is of no use to the world because its water cannot irrigate fields and produce crop. The salty and dirty water of the ocean evaporates to form clouds. The water molecules in the cloud are free from their salty origin; they are clean and sweet. When this water, which has its origin in the ocean, begins to shower down upon the earth as rain, it fosters life and greenery everywhere. Harvest and life directly depend upon rain-water, and not at all upon the ocean, though the origin of the rain is in the ocean which is a vast reservoir of water, but the rain benefits the population more directly. This is exactly what is meant here. Though the divine story of Lord Ram is a vast reservoir of spirituality and bliss, its benefit can be enjoyed only when it is explained by wise men, and when the seeker accesses the key to his happiness and bliss, which is Bhakti.

²The saints and sages help to propagate the virtue of Bhakti and other spiritual fruits contained in the divine story of Lord Ram, and make them easily available to this world, in its farthest corner, just like the wind carries the fragrance of the sandalwood to distant places, far away from the physical location of the actual tree.

³Earlier in Chaupai line no. 14 it has already been said that wise saints are like expert mineralogists who know how to dig and extract the priceless gem from the mine present in the mountains symbolising the voluminous text of the scriptures. Company of such wise men helps a spiritual aspirant in many ways. It helps him to remove his doubts; it helps him to choose the correct path; it helps him avoid pitfalls; it helps him to discover the reward when it comes.

Even Lord Ram has stressed the importance of saints in the path of attainment of Bhakti in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45 while he was preaching the citizens of Ayodhya on the glories of Bhakti.]

दो०. ब्रह्म पयोनिधि मंदर ग्यान संत सुर आहिं ।

कथा सुधा मथि काढ़हिं भगति मधुरता जाहिं ॥ १२० (क) ॥

dōhā.

brahma payōnidhi mandara gyāna santa sura āhim.
kathā sudhā mathi kārḥahim bhagati madhuratā jāhim. 120 (a).

‘Brahm’ (the cosmic Consciousness, the knowledge of which is the subject matter of all research, discussion, exposition and elucidation in the Vedas, the Purans and other scriptures) is like a vast and fathomless ocean, ‘Gyan’ (the knowledge of this Brahm; gnosis; enlightenment and true wisdom) is like Mt. Mandrachal (which was used in some ancient time to churn this ocean in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss), and ‘Saints’ are like the Gods (who had churned the cosmic ocean using this mountain as the churning rod to extract Amrit from the cosmic water)¹.

These saints thoroughly study, analyse, understand and discuss the scriptures in order to extract their essence in the form of the divine, holy and sacred stories of the Lord (Sri Ram) that is extremely sweet and pleasant like nectar, and would provide nourishment to the Atma or the soul of all living beings by granting them abiding blessedness, a sense of spiritual contentedness and fulfilment, and joy, happiness, bliss, felicity and beatitude in mighty abundance². (Doha no. 120-a)

[Note—¹This metaphor alludes to the legendary churning of the ocean by the Gods in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. At that time, they had used this mountain as the churning rod.

²In this Doha, Brahm is likened to the cosmic ocean because Brahm is as vast and all-encompassing like it. The entire universe was filled with the cosmic ether from which the first signs of creation emerged in the form of sound waves. Brahm represents that cosmic Consciousness which first created the ripples of sound waves in the cosmic ether to mark the beginning of the new phase of creation. Brahm fills the entire universe just like water fills the entire ocean and ether fills the cosmic sky.

Just like the case of the huge bowl of earth acting as a container or vessel or receptacle filled with water which we recognise as an ‘ocean’ in terrestrial terms, and the sky is the cosmic bowl that is filled with ether at the macro-level of creation which we recognise as the cosmos or the universe, the knowledge of Brahm that is contained in the scriptures is similarly a vast and fathomless metaphoric ocean that is a huge reservoir of spiritual knowledge.

The ocean is full of fascinating mysteries and is a virtual miniature cosmos with its independent marine culture and ecosystem. It is different from life as we know it from what we see and understand of it on the land. No one has ever been able to map the ocean fully, and no one would ever know the whole truth that lies in its vast bowl and an endless realm. The ocean surrounds the land-mass of earth and appears to support it from below because the earth appears to be floating on its surface like a ball.

The ocean is therefore compared to Brahm because Brahm is also measureless, endless and fathomless like the ocean, is mysterious and fascinating like the ocean, and surrounds and supports the entire creation like the ocean appears to do in relation to the land-mass of earth.

In some ancient time, the Gods had churned the cosmic ocean to extract Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. So likewise, erudite and sagacious saints read and analyse the scriptures to extract their essence in the form of the divine stories of the Lord God, stories that bestow spiritual blessedness, bliss, peace, happiness and contentedness to the reader and the listener alike. These sacred stories of the Lord provide liberation and deliverance from all worldly miseries and torments to the

reader as well as the listener; these holy stories grant emancipation and salvation to the soul of both of them.

In brief, the knowledge of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Being, that is contained in the Vedas is like the vast cosmic ocean; the virtue of Gyan is like the Mandraachal Mountain; and the saints and wise ones are like the Gods who had churned this ocean to extract Amrit from its bowls.

Anyone who symbolically churns this ocean is able to extract the Amrit or nectar of eternity and bliss. To wit, any wise, erudite and sagacious person, such as a saint, who thoroughly studies, understands and analyses the scriptures is able to extract their essence in the form of the glorious virtue of 'Bhakti' that is the central message contained in all the divine stories of the Lord God found in the scriptures. This message is like a spiritual nectar as it provides an immense sense of blessedness, joy, bliss and ecstasy to all who preach it and hear it. This nectar also grants liberation and deliverance from all the horrors and miseries of mortal life; it bestows emancipation and salvation to the soul of the teacher as well as the disciple.]

बिरति चर्म असि ग्यान मद लोभ मोह रिपु मारि ।

जय पाइअ सो हरि भगति देखु खगेस बिचारि ॥ १२० (ख) ॥

birati carma asi gyāna mada lōbha mōha ripu māri.

jaya pā'i'a sō hari bhagati dēkhu khagēsa bicāri. 120 (b).

{The analogy of a warrior defeating his enemies to obtain victory is used here to emphasise the importance of Bhakti for a person to help him eliminate all spiritual hurdles in life to obtain abiding peace and happiness as well as liberation and deliverance for his soul.}

Using 'Vairagya' (dispassion, detachment and renunciation) as an impregnable shield for self-defence, employing the symbolic sword of 'Gyan' (gnosis; truthful knowledge, self-realisation, wisdom and enlightenment) to slay the countless enemies represented by the hordes of spiritual tormentors such as 'Mada' (arrogance, haughtiness, pride and ego), 'Lobha' (greed and rapacity for material things and riches of the gross world, and a desire for comfort and pleasure that is derived from them), 'Moha' (infatuation and attachment with such things)—it is indeed 'Bhakti' of Lord Hari (devotion for Lord Sri Ram) that helps the living being to attain victory over his (spiritual) tormentors and enemies in this world who had earlier robbed him of all his peace and happiness.

Oh the King of Birds (khagēsa)! Reflect over this matter deeply and try to understand its implications and import. [Oh Garud, you must understand that it is actually the glorious virtue of 'Bhakti' for Lord Ram which stands close to a devotee to help him fight his spiritual tormentors like a faithful companion of a warrior who stands by his side, shoulder-to-shoulder, does to help him defeat his enemies.]¹ (Doha no. 120-b)

[Note—¹It is the Bhakti for Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram) that protects the devotee with the help of the shield symbolized by the virtue of Vairagya, and kills his enemies represented by Mada, Lobha and Moha by using the sword of Gyan to make him fearless.

Mada, Lobha, Moha are some of the spiritual enemies of a person. They are called ‘enemies’ because they keep tormenting him and prevent him from attaining peace and happiness in life. To overcome these enemies, a person needs to have a good friend and a comrade-in-arms by his side, and he finds such a true friend in the form of the virtue of ‘Bhakti’.

Further, to defeat such formidable enemies, one needs to have a shield symbolised by the virtue of ‘Vairagya’, and a weapon in the form of a sword symbolised by the virtue of ‘Gyan’. He uses this sword of Gyan to eliminate his spiritual enemies, and in case he is attacked directly by them he uses the shield of Vairagya to protect himself.

To wit, a wise, erudite and sagacious spiritual aspirant uses knowledge and wisdom to overcome the numerous faults and shortcomings that afflict his inner-self like so many spiritual diseases so as to pave the way to perfection, holiness, purity and piety of the soul. Then he uses the virtue of dispassion and detachment to overcome the formidable forces of temptation and gnawing desire for gratification that arise from the material world of sense objects and their countless charms. ‘Victory’ in this battle is attainment of eternal spiritual peace, tranquillity, joy and happiness for the aspirant; it is attainment of liberation and deliverance from all miseries, sufferings and pains in life in this mortal world; it is obtaining final emancipation and salvation for his soul so that he is freed from the cycle of birth and death once and for all.]

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PART—5

[Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Doha no. 125-a.]

चौ०. पुनि सप्रेम बोलेउ खगराऊ । जौं कृपाल मोहि ऊपर भाऊ ॥ १ ॥

नाथ मोहि निज सेवक जानी । सप्त प्रस्न मम कहहु बखानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puni saprēma bōlē'u khagarā'ū. jaur̥ṁ kṛpāla mōhi ūpara bhā'ū. 1.
nātha mōhi nija sēvaka jānī. sapta prasna mama kahahu bakhānī. 2.

The king of birds (“khagarā'ū”—i.e. Garud) affectionately said to Kaagbhusund once again, ‘Oh the merciful and gracious one (kṛpāla)! If you have affection for me and regard me as your true follower or disciple (sēvaka jānī), then oh Lord (jaur̥ṁ - nātha), please be kind to answer my following seven questions in detail¹. (1-2)

[Note—¹In the previous discourse, Kaagbhusund has expounded upon the importance of and the differences between Gyan and Bhakti, as well as the reason why he had preferred the body of a crow over all other options.

A good disciple should feel free to ask his teacher any question that arises in his mind, and a good teacher should give this freedom to his student. Garud wished to

clarify on some more points, and he did not hesitate in requesting Kaagbhusund to remove his doubts. The ensuing verses relate to this discourse.]

प्रथमहिं कहहु नाथ मतिधीरा । सब ते दुर्लभ कवन सरीरा ॥ ३ ॥

बड़ दुख कवन कवन सुख भारी । सोउ संछेपहिं कहहु बिचारी ॥ ४ ॥

prathamahim kahahu nātha matidhīrā. saba tē durlabha kavana sarīrā. 3.
baṛa dukha kavana kavana sukha bhārī. sō'u sañchēpahim kahahu bicārī. 4.

Oh the erudite and sagacious Lord with a steadfast intellect (nātha matidhīrā)! First tell me which form is regarded as the rarest (i.e. the best) of all the forms in which a creature is born? (3)

Then tell me which is the greatest sorrow or grief for a creature, and which is the best sort of pleasure, joy and happiness? Please think over the matter and enlighten me in brief. (4)

संत असंत मरम तुम्ह जानहु । तिन्ह कर सहज सुभाव बखानहु ॥ ५ ॥

कवन पुन्य श्रुति बिदित बिसाला । कहहु कवन अघ परम कराला ॥ ६ ॥

santa asanta marama tumha jānahu. tinha kara sahaja subhāva bakhānahu.
5.
kavana pun'ya śruti bidita bisālā. kahahu kavana agha parama karālā. 6.

You are well acquainted with the inherent qualities, mentality and characters of both the saints and the non-saints. Please describe these natural qualities and innate dispositions for me¹. (5)

Then tell me which is the best meritorious deed (pun'ya) that is lauded by the Vedas (scriptures), and which is the worst and terrible sin or the greatest misdeed (agha parama karālā) that a creature can ever commit. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 41 where Lord Ram has enumerated these qualities himself when requested by Bharat.]

मानस रोग कहहु समुझाई । तुम्ह सबग्य कृपा अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥

तात सुनहु सादर अति प्रीती । मैं संछेप कहउँ यह नीती ॥ ८ ॥

mānasa rōga kahahu samujhāī. tumha sarbagya kṛpā adhikāī. 7.
tāta sunahu sādara ati prīti. maim sañchēpa kaha'um' yaha nīti. 8.

After that, please explain to me clearly the various mental and emotional diseases (mānasa rōga) that afflict (and torment) a creature. You are all-knowing and omniscient, and you are endowed with the virtues of grace and compassion.

[Therefore I am sure you will not become annoyed when I pose these queries before you, and you would be gracious enough to answer my questions clearly so that all my remaining doubts are fully removed.]’ (7)

(Kaagbhusund graciously and willingly replied—] ‘Dear (tāta), have faith in me and listen attentively as I give my views to answer your questions in brief. [To wit, trust me that I will tell you the correct thing as it stands, without any bias, and without concealing or withholding any information. Now I shall answer your questions one by one.] (8)

नर तन सम नहिं कवनिउ देही । जीव चराचर जाचत तेही ॥ ९ ॥

नरक स्वर्ग अपबर्ग निसेनी । ग्यान बिराग भगति सुभ देनी ॥ १० ॥

nara tana sama nahim kavani'u dēhī. jīva carācara jācata tēhī. 9.
naraka svarga apabarga nisēnī. gyāna birāga bhagati subha dēnī. 10.

[The answer to the first question:] There is no form or body like that of a human being. Every creature, animate or inanimate, craves for it; every creature would like to be born as a human being. [To wit, the human body is the best and the rarest of all the forms which a creature is fortunate to get in the hierarchy of evolution and its cycle of birth and death. If given a choice, every creature would prefer to be born as a human being.]¹ (9)

This human body is the stepping stone for either hell or heaven, and it can help the creature to obtain final emancipation and salvation, or attain liberation and deliverance of the soul. It is an auspicious instrument, a powerful tool and an effective means by which one can attain the eclectic spiritual virtues of ‘Gyan’ (true knowledge, wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment), ‘Vairagya’ (renunciation, dispassion and detachment) and Bhakti (devotion for Lord God)². (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44 where Lord Ram has himself praised the human form as the best form a creature can expect to get. The Lord has emphasised that this is the reason why one should not misuse it, but rather employ it to attain final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death and its accompanying chain of miseries and torments. If one foolishly fritters away this opportunity in worthless worldly pursuits then one would gravely regret it for generations to come.

²To wit, the human body or form is regarded as the most evolved and the best form that a living being can hope to get in the process of evolution. A human is endowed with so many unique qualities and powers that no other form of creature possesses. The human form is the ‘king of the animal kingdom’. Even as a king is free to do so many things that others in the kingdom can’t, possesses immense powers and freedom to act, enjoys the best things of the world and so on and so forth, a creature is best placed to make a good decision for his future and determine his destiny when he is born as a human being as compared to any other form.

The creature enjoys so many privileges that are denied to any other form, and has so many excellent tools at his disposal as a human being to determine the course

of his fate and destiny that it would be extremely unfortunate for him if he wastes this golden opportunity. Some of the excellent tools that are available to a creature in the form of a human being are his ability to think intelligently, make wise choices and exercise discretion, take wise decisions and act on his decisions, acquire knowledge and wisdom, do good deeds and practice auspicious things while shunning evil ones, and so on.

Say for instance, can an animal do meditation, study the scriptures, make charity, acquire skills and knowledge, or practice self-restraint and other spiritual values that a human being can?]

सो तनु धरि हरि भजहिं न जे नर । होहिं विषय रत मंद मंद तर ॥ ११ ॥
काँच किरिच बदलें ते लेहीं । कर ते डारि परस मनि देहीं ॥ १२ ॥

sō tanu dhari hari bhajahim na jē nara. hōhim viṣaya rata manda manda tara. 11.

kām̐ca kirica badalēm tē lēhīm. kara tē ḍāri parasa mani dēhīm. 12.

Those most unfortunate and ill-fated creatures who do not employ this human body to worship Lord Hari and have devotion for the Lord, and instead pursue and long for the most abhorable and lowliest of things of the gross mortal world and its sense objects of pleasure and self-gratification, are indeed utterly stupid as they willingly throw away a rare gem known as the ‘Parasmani’ (the magical gem that can convert base metals into precious ones such as gold; the philosopher’s stone) that is in their hands, and grab worthless pieces of glass beads instead. (11-12)

[Note—Here, using the human form to acquire the glorious virtues of Gyan, Vairagya and Bhakti that would pave the way for liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation is equivalent to having the ‘Parasmani’, while using the human body to indulge in worldly affairs and being obsessed by its charms and temptations is like willingly accepting glass beads and throwing away the Parasmani.]

नहिं दरिद्र सम दुख जग माहीं । संत मिलन सम सुख जग नाहीं ॥ १३ ॥
पर उपकार बचन मन काया । संत सहज सुभाउ खगराया ॥ १४ ॥

nahim daridra sama dukha jaga māhīm. santa milana sama sukha jaga nāhīm. 13.

para upakāra bacana mana kāyā. santa sahaja subhā'u khagarāyā. 14.

There is no misery in this world that can be greater than poverty and wants; and there is no happiness, no joy and no blessing greater in this world than having contact or association or communion with a sain¹t. (13)

‘Benefit and good of others’ is always in the speech, thought and deeds of a saint; this is their natural disposition and habit². (14)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 125-b where Lord Shiva has said the same thing to his consort Girija.

²The grand qualities of true saints have been outlined by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38.

At the end of this discourse, Garud has lauded the virtues of saints while praising Kaagbhusund and thanking him for his spiritual advice that removed all his dilemmas and doubts in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 125.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 84; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 41.]

संत सहहिं दुख परहित लागी । परदुख हेतु असंत अभागी ॥ १५ ॥

भूर्ज तरू सम संत कृपाला । परहित निति सह बिपति बिसाला ॥ १६ ॥

santa sahaḥiṁ dukha parahita lāgī. paradukha hētu asanta abhāgī. 15.
bhūrja tarū sama santa kṛpālā. parahita niti saha bipati bisālā. 16.

Saints undergo sufferings for the benefit of others (so that the latter get solace and comfort), while non-saints are so unfortunate that they are the cause of pain and grief of others (even if they do not gain from it)¹. (15)

The merciful and tender-hearted saints and holy people are like the Birch tree, their principal nature being to serve others even if it means great suffering for themselves². (16)

[Note—¹True saints take great care that they are not the cause of any sort of discomfort to others. Instead, they strive to provide solace and happiness to others even if it meant they have to endure sufferance themselves. On the other hand, it is the natural habit of non-saints that they enjoy the suffering of others even if it does not lead to any gain for themselves.

The qualities of saints vis-à-vis non-saints have also been described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 41.

Refer also specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 41.

²Saints are compared to the Birch tree because the outer layer of this tree is torn off and beaten to a pulp to make paper, as well as clothes that were worn by sages and hermits in ancient times. In other words, saintly persons would prefer to subject themselves to the greatest of pains if their pain and suffering help others. The most stellar example of one such saint is king Dadhichi who had given his own bones to the Gods so that they can devise weapons from these bones so as to defeat the demons.]

सन इव खल पर बंधन करई । खाल कढ़ाई बिपति सहि मरई ॥ १७ ॥

खल बिनु स्वारथ पर अपकारी । अहि मूषक इव सुनु उरगारी ॥ १८ ॥

sana iva khala para bandhana kara'ī. khāla karḥā'i bipati sahi mara'ī. 17.
khala binu svāratha para apakārī. ahi mūṣaka iva sunu uragārī. 18.

The wicked people with a pervert mind are like the hemp which is used as a rope to bind others; they would not mind getting their skin peeled-off if this causes harm to others inspite of the fact that this may result in their own death. (17)

Oh the Enemy of Serpents (uragārī—i.e. Garud)! A wicked and evil person is like a serpent or a rat who cause harm or injury to others even if this results in no personal gain or good for the¹. (18)

[Note—¹A rat has the habit of nibbling at household things and destroying stores without rhyme or reason. A snake would bite a person and kill him even if this does not benefit it in any way. Likewise, a vile person derives immense pleasure by seeing others suffering and wallowing in pain, and this seductive pleasure increases manifold if he becomes an instrument to inflict these torments. Instead of feeling a pang of guilt and empathy for those who are caused suffering due to him, and inspite of gaining nothing himself with the wicked act of his, an evil man feels happy and enjoys the sight of others overcome by pain and grief.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 40 in this context.]

पर संपदा बिनासि नसाहीं । जिमि ससि हति हिम उपल बिलाहीं ॥ १९ ॥
दुष्ट उदय जग आरति हेतू । जथा प्रसिद्ध अधम ग्रह केतू ॥ २० ॥

para sampadā bināsi nasāhīm. jimi sasi hati hima upala bilāhīm. 19.
duṣṭa udaya jaga ārati hētū. jathā prasid'dha adhama graha kētū. 20.

In fact, a person who is wicked, pervert and evil would not regret perishing himself after causing immense harm to others and destroying whatever they possess just like the hail that first destroys the crop standing in the field (of the farmer) and then perishes itself (by melting away)¹. (19)

The rise or ascendance or elevation of people who are wicked, vile, sinful and pervert is a harbinger of ill-fortune for the world at large like the rise of the comet in the sky (because a comet is regarded as a bad omen which brings in its wake natural calamities and other catastrophic events). (20)

[Note—¹The hail first batters the standing crop and destroys it, and then it melts away. Similarly, a vile person would enjoy destroying the wealth of others even if it means that he himself loses all that he has.]

संत उदय संतत सुखकारी । बिस्व सुखद जिमि इंदु तमारी ॥ २१ ॥

परम धर्म श्रुति बिदित अहिंसा । पर निंदा सम अघ न गरीसा ॥ २२ ॥

santa udaya santata sukhakārī. bisva sukhada jimi indu tamārī. 21.
parama dharma śruti bidita ahinsā. para nindā sama agha na garīsā. 22.

On the other hand, the rise or advancement of a saint is always the cause of universal joy, happiness and comfort in the world just like the rising of the moon and the sun (indu tamārī)¹ invariably brings joy and delight for the whole world. (21)

It is prescribed in the Vedas (which are the primary scriptures) that the best religious merit a person can acquire is to observe the vow of non-violence (ahinsā)². And (the same Vedas say that) speaking ill of others is a grave sin. (22)

[Note—¹The sun is called “tamārī” because it destroys darkness, or “Tama”.

²‘Ahinsa’ or non-violence here is invoked in all its connotations and aspects, such as physical, mental and emotional. It is not limited to abstaining from physical killing of a creature. It involves not doing anything that harms others and causes them pain and grief to them, even if it is done subtly and indirectly by one’s thoughts that plan harm of others or instructions given to a third person with respect to the person intended to be harmed, or overtly by one’s own offensive words, speech, actions and deeds done directly.]

हर गुर निंदक दादुर होई । जन्म सहस्र पाव तन सोई ॥ २३ ॥
द्विज निंदक बहु नरक भोग करि । जग जनमइ बायस सरीर धरि ॥ २४ ॥

hara gura nindaka dādura hōī. janma sahasra pāva tana sōī. 23.
dvija nindaka bahu naraka bhōga kari. jaga janama'i bāyasa sarīra dhari. 24.

{In the following few verses, the main idea expressed is that one must not speak ill of others.}

Those who speak ill of one’s Guru (moral preceptor; teacher and guide) and Lord Shiva (“Hara”) are born as a ‘frog’ in their next birth for countless generations.

[The word ‘frog’ is a derogatory term used for someone who croaks meaninglessly, is loathsome and lowly in life, and is a mentally dull and stupid.] (23)

Those who speak ill of Brahmins (representing the learned and wise people in the society) suffer in hell for a long time before they are born as a ‘crow’ on this earth.

[Like the frog, a crow is also loathed by the people and not liked by anyone. The crow’s crowing and the frog’s croaking are used as metaphors for the meaningless talk of those people who criticise their Guru, Lord Shiva and Brahmins. No wise man would pay heed to them.] (24)

सुर श्रुति निंदक जे अभिमानी । रौरव नरक परहिं ते ग्रानी ॥ २५ ॥

होहिं उलूक संत निंदा रत । मोह निसा प्रिय ग्यान भानु गत ॥ २६ ॥

surā śruti nindaka jē abhimānī. raurava naraka parahim tē prānī. 25
hōhim ulūka santa nindā rata. mōha nisā priya gyāna bhānu gata. 26.

Those Jivas (creatures) who are proud of themselves and their knowledge, and haughtily criticise the Gods and the Vedas, they fall in the gravest of all hells known as 'Raurava'. (25)

Those who indulge in speaking ill of saints become an 'owl'. Such people are fond of the night symbolising Moha (darkness of delusions and ignorance leading to attachment and infatuation), and for them the sun symbolising wisdom and truth has set (faded away; they don't like it)¹. (26)

[Note—¹Like the frog and the crow used in previous verses, the owl is also a derogatory term used for a person who is exceptionally foolish. The owl comes out in the night, and it is believed that it can see only in the darkness of the night as the light of the sun makes it blind. In this metaphor, true wisdom and knowledge are like the 'light of the sun', and delusions and ignorance are like 'the darkness of the night'. A saint is like 'the sun' because he shows the path to wisdom, true knowledge, enlightenment and self-realisation, while those who criticise them are deemed to be non-saints who speak of things that push a man into a dark well of delusions and worldly attachments. Hence, those who speak ill of saints are like a person who suffers from some disease which makes him close his eyes in sunlight and open them only when it is dark. Such persons do not like wisdom and truth and find it hard to climb the hill of spirituality, but rather prefer to go spiritually downhill and enjoy the world and its sense objects.

Like the voice of the frog and the crow, the hooting of the owl is also paid no attention by any person, and in fact it is regarded as a bad omen. This sound of the owl speaking is synonymous with an eerie atmosphere dominated by evil spirits, ghosts and phantoms.]

सब कै निंदा जे जड़ करहीं । ते चमगादुर होइ अवतरहीं ॥ २७ ॥

सुनुहु तात अब मानस रोगा । जिन्ह ते दुख पावहिं सब लोगा ॥ २८ ॥

saba kai nindā jē jaṛa karahīm. tē camagādura hō'i avatarahīm. 27.
sunahu tāta aba mānasa rōgā. jinha tē dukha pāvahim saba lōgā. 28.

Those dumb-witted people who indulge in censuring others and speaking ill of one and all are born as 'bats' in their next lives. (27)

Now listen dear (sunahu tāta aba) about the mental and emotional ailments (mānasa rōgā) that afflict everyone and make them suffer. [This is the last question of Garud. Refer verse no. 7 herein above.] (28)

मोह सकल व्याधिन्ह कर मूला । तिन्ह ते पुनि उपजहिं बहु सूला ॥ २९ ॥

काम बात कफ लोभ अपारा । क्रोध पित्त नित छाती जारा ॥ ३० ॥

mōha sakala byādhinḥa kara mūlā. tinha tē puni upajahim bahu sūlā. 29.
kāma bāta kapha lōbha apārā. krōdha pitta nita chātī jārā. 30.

‘Moha’ (attachment and infatuation with the world arising out of delusion and ignorance) is at the root of all such (mental and emotional as well as spiritual) diseases (or problems). From this single root arises many other problems that act as countless thorns (upajahim bahu sūlā) for the creature¹. (29)

In this disease, ‘Kaam’ (passion and lust) is like the wind or flatulence formed inside the body (that makes a man feel bloated and fidgety) that causes rheumatism (pain and fever that makes a man very uneasy).

‘Lobha’ (greed and rapacity) is like the disturbed cough and mucous (that may create difficulty in breathing and makes a man feel suffocative).

‘Krodha’ (anger; wrathfulness; desire for revenge; fury) is like the excess of acids formed inside the body that cause heartburn and burning sensation in the abdomen². (30)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 71 (a).

²When a person suffers from any of these disturbed elements in the body, he becomes very restless. He loses his patience and balance of mind, and takes irrational decisions in his bid to get rid of his problems. This is a metaphoric way of describing how a person who is overcome by such negative qualities as Moha, Kaam, Lobha and Krodha loses his wisdom and is driven by them to commit grave errors in life. These errors aggravate his spiritual problems instead of ameliorating them; they create a lot of hindrance in his spiritual path and rob him of all his peace and happiness.]

प्रीति करहिं जौं तीनिउ भाई । उपजइ सन्यपात दुखदाई ॥ ३१ ॥

बिषय मनोरथ दुर्गम नाना । ते सब सूल नाम को जाना ॥ ३२ ॥

prīti karahim jaum tīni'u bhāī. upaja'i san'yapāta dukhadāī. 31.
biṣaya manōratha durgama nānā. tē saba sūla nāma kō jānā. 32.

If these three elements join hands in a bond of ‘brotherhood’, the consequences are horrible for him, because they produce a fever marked by high temperature and delirium that makes the sick man suffer a lot¹. (31)

The desire to obtain the objects of sensual pleasure and comfort in the world and derive self-gratification from them is very hard to fulfil in its entirety. This unfulfilled or unrequited desire makes a man feel constantly miserable, and it sets off a chain reaction of sufferings, grief and misery. It is like the immense amount of suffering that a grave disease causes to a sick person; the disease assumes so many forms that it becomes difficult to even name (or diagnose) them². (32)

[Note—¹If Kaam, Lobha and Krodha act together and influence a person simultaneously, the problems are increased manifold times for him as compared to a situation where only one of these factors is disturbing his mind. Just like a sick person suffering from a host of ailments such as formation of flatulence, acid and cough, is made to suffer more if he develops high fever with delirium, a person who is overwhelmed by all the three negative qualities is subjected to immense spiritual torments. His life becomes one big hell.

²If a man begins to expect happiness in the material world and thinks that the purpose of life is in the enjoyment of the sense objects of the world, then he will find himself in a cesspool filled with quicksand because he would want more and more of everything, and his lust will find no end which makes him spend his entire energy and time in acquiring the material things he yearns for. He will never feel contented with what he has but would want more and more of it. His peace of mind is lost; he suffers from constant anxiety and worries—first regarding how to get more, and then how to safeguard what he already has. Since the world is transient and perishable, since if it ever changing and mortal, whatever a person acquires after strenuous efforts is bound to decay and go away one day. This results in grief at its loss.

Similarly, if a man allows himself to become a victim of Moha, Kaam, Lobha and Krodha, his miseries and sufferings would multiply manifold times and would never end.]

ममता दादु कंडु इरषाई । हरष बिषाद गरह बहुताई ॥ ३३ ॥
पर सुख देखि जरनि सोइ छई । कुष्ट दुष्टता मन कुटिलई ॥ ३४ ॥

mamatā dādu kaṇḍu iraṣā'ī. haraṣa biṣāda garaha bahutā'ī. 33.
para sukha dēkhi jarani sō'i cha'ī. kuṣṭa duṣṭatā mana kuṭila'ī. 34.

'Mamata' (longing, infatuation, obsessiveness, attachment—that leads to the sense of 'my' or 'mine' with thing in this gross world) is like a skin disease called ringworm. In this disease, 'Irshya' (jealously and malice) is like the severe itch that it produces¹.

'Harsha and Vishad' (feeling joy in fulfilment of desires, and grief when they can't be realised) are like the various diseases of the throat (such as sore throat, diphtheria, mumps, ulceration and boils, swollen glands as goitre and tonsillitis, and so on). (33)

The sense of jealousy and grudge that one harbours in one's heart when he sees others happy and prosperous is like the wasting disease known as tuberculosis².

The wickedness and pervert nature of the mind is like leprosy³. (34)

[Note—¹The ringworm itches intensely, and it constantly attracts attention. Likewise, a person will be always thinking of those things which he loves and yearns for. His misery is increased when he is jealous of others who possess things that he longs for. This longing would prevent him from thinking of anything else. He would not even worry about his own fate and spiritual welfare if he becomes too obsessive with the world and its material things.

²This disease slowly eats away into the flesh and makes a man very weak in due course of time. Likewise, if a person is jealous of others, if he keeps grudges against others, he would gradually lose all his mental peace to become sick in body and mind.

³Again, like tuberculosis, leprosy is a grave and incurable disease. It also makes a man extremely weak and fragile. Further, a patient suffering from either tuberculosis or leprosy is shunned by others in the society. Similarly, if a person harbours jealousy and malice for others, if he keeps grudges in his heart for all, then no one would like to keep his company. He will be detested and hated by the society. Surely, this situation would make life hell for him just as these two grave diseases make life hell for those who suffer from them.]

अहंकार अति दुखद डमरुआ । दंभ कपट मद मान नेहरुआ ॥ ३५ ॥
तृस्ना उदरबृद्धि अति भारी । त्रिबिधि ईषना तरुन तिजारी ॥ ३६ ॥

ahaṅkāra ati dukhada ḍamaru'ā. dambha kapaṭa mada māna nēharu'ā. 35.
tṛṣṇā udarabṛd'dhi ati bhārī. tribidhi īṣanā taruna tijārī. 36.

'Ahankar' (arrogance, ego, pride, haughtiness) is like the disease of the joints (arthritis) that makes a man stiffened and feel extremely miserable with a lot of pain¹.

'Dambha' and 'Kapat' ((deceit, conceit, perversions, pretensions,) as well as 'Mada' and 'Maana' (arrogance, haughtiness, vanity, hypocrisy, and a false sense of pride and ego) are like the many diseases of the nerves and veins. (35)

'Trishna' (yearning for the material things of the world; longing for self-gratification; thirst for enjoyment of the senses) is like the horrible disease known as dropsy.

Strong desire for the three things of this world (i.e. son, wealth and honour) is like the quartan ague fever (an intermittent type of malaria that recurs every third day)². (36)

[Note—¹To wit, just like arthritis makes movements of limbs difficult, a man who is filled with ego and pride becomes stubborn and rigid in his approach to everything due to his arrogance and haughty nature. Such a person cannot imbibe knowledge and improve himself because of his stubbornness and inflexibility. He would not listen to any advice, and would stick to his ways no matter how wrong they are.

²This is a recurring form of fever that comes every third day. So therefore, if a person is obsessed with his son, wealth and honour in this world, these three combine to cause him recurrent sorrow, misery and grief, one after another. If a person is able to overcome one type of sorrow, he is quickly overwhelmed by another.]

जुग बिधि ज्वर मत्सर अबिबेका । कहँ लगि कहौँ कुरोग अनेका ॥ ३७ ॥

juga bidhi jvara matsara abibēkā. kaham'lagi kahaur'm kurōga anēkā. 37.

‘Matsarya’ (jealousy and malice) and ‘Aviveka’ (lack of wisdom and intelligent thinking; irrationality) are like the two forms of fever (such as typhoid and hay fevers)¹.

In this way, there are countless other mental and emotional diseases which are too many to be mentioned. (37)

[Note—¹Already different types of fevers have been cited. These two additional fevers add to a person’s woes. So here it would mean a combination of any two types of miseries and sorrows that torment a person in any given point of time in his life. This simply means that if a man has the negative qualities of Matsarya and Avivek in him, his sufferings would be doubled.]

दो०. एक व्याधि बस नर मरहिं ए असाधि बहु व्याधि ।

पीड़हि संतत जीव कहूँ सो किमि लहै समाधि ॥ १२१ (क) ॥

dōhā.

ēka byādhi basa nara maraḥiṁ ē asādhi bahu byādhi.
pīṛaḥiṁ santata jīva kahum̐ sō kimi lahai samādhi. 121 (a).

Even any one disease is enough to kill a man, but here there are countless incurable diseases that continuously torment a creature (Jiva). Say, in this situation how can a person ever find calmness of mind and peace for himself like the sort that is obtained when one does meditation and enters a tranquil and steady state of mind known as Samadhi¹? (Doha no. 121-a)

[Note—¹Samadhi is a state of existence of consciousness that is attained in the higher stages of meditation, a stage called ‘Turiya’. Here the mind is free from all disturbances arising out of the sensory inputs from the external world. It is a state marked by complete and total tranquillity and peace. If a person is suffering from so many symbolic spiritual diseases as outlined herein above, it is impossible that he would be able to meditate peacefully in the first place, and therefore attainment of Samadhi and its accompanying state of blissfulness is out of the question.]

नेम धर्म आचार तप ग्यान जग्य जप दान ।

भेषज पुनि कोटिन्ह नहिं रोग जाहिं हरिजान ॥ १२१ (ख) ॥

nēma dharma ācāra tapa gyāna jagya japa dāna.
bhēṣaja puni kōṭinha nahiṁ rōga jāhiṁ harijāna. 121 (b).

There are indeed countless remedies for these spiritual ailments, such as observance of certain vows and religious sacraments (nēma), following an auspicious path of righteousness, propriety, probity and noble conduct (dharma), inculcating good virtues, practicing morality and developing an excellent character (ācāra), doing penance and austerity (tapa), acquiring true knowledge and wisdom (gyāna), doing sacrifices and meditation (jagya), repeating the holy Mantras (spiritual formulas such

as the divine name of the Lord God— *japa*), making charities and giving donations and alms (*dāna*), and so on and so forth.

But, oh the devotee of Lord Hari and his great mount (“*harijāna*”—i.e. Garud), none of them can cure these diseases from the root; none of them is powerful enough to neutralise the horrifying consequences of these spiritual ailments. (Doha no. 121-b)

चौ०. एहि बिधि सकल जीव जग रोगी । सोक हरष भय प्रीति बियोगी ॥ १ ॥
मानस रोग कछुक मैं गाए । हहिं सब कें लखि बिरलेन्ह पाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi sakala jīva jaga rōgī. sōka haraṣa bhaya prīti biyōgī. 1.
mānasa rōga kachuka mair̥m gā'ē. hahim̥ saba kēm lakhi biralēnha pā'ē. 2.

In this way (as described in the previous verses), every Jiva (creature; living being) is afflicted with so many ailments and suffering constantly from them. Their woes are exacerbated further by the constant tossing of waves of grief caused by the separation from a dear one whom one loves much, or even the fear of such separation, and the joy of meeting someone whom one loves much, or the expectation of such a meeting¹.
(1)

I (Kaagbhusund) have enumerated some of the spiritual and emotional ailments that afflict all the creatures; no one is an exception to it. But the irony is that though every single living being suffers from them to some extent, it is rare for someone to recognise these ailments and endeavour to find a correct remedy for a particular disease that afflicts him. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the creature is already suffering internally from so much emotional turmoil that his mind and soul can never find rest and peace. His torments are aggravated further by external factors of grief and fear of hate on the one hand, and happiness and expectations of love on the other hand that whatever traces of peace that are left over for him are also eliminated. As a result of this unfortunate situation, the poor creature is left bobbling up and down in the crests and troughs of elation and joy on the one end, and depression and dejection on the other end like a helpless piece of wood left adrift on the surface of an ocean that is violently choppy.

²A similar idea is expressed in Tulsidas' excellent Book of Prayers known as 'Vinai Patrika', in its verse no. 81. An English version of this wonderful book has been published separately by the author of this present book.]

जाने ते छीजहिं कछु पापी । नास न पावहिं जन परितापी ॥ ३ ॥
बिषय कुपथ्य पाइ अंकुरे । मुनिहु हृदयँ का नर बापुरे ॥ ४ ॥

jānē tē chījahim̥ kachu pāpī. nāsa na pāvahim̥ jana paritāpī. 3.
biṣaya kupathya pā'i ankurē. munihu hṛdayam̥ kā nara bāpurē. 4.

If one recognises or becomes aware of these cruel tormentors of a creature which cause endless heartburn for him, their negative effects are somewhat reduced, but not completely eliminated.

[When one becomes aware of these spiritual problems, he takes precautionary measures and guards himself against them. The result is they become less painful and less horrifying. But they are not eradicated from their roots.] (3)

These spiritual and emotional ailments thrive on carelessness or ignorance on the part of a creature. Like any other latent disease that is aggravated by not taking proper precaution against it, or if the person suffering from it does not restrain himself from eating such food as would stoke the dormant disease and revive it, these spiritual ailments are stoked by indulgence in enjoyment of pleasures of the sense objects of the world and getting hooked to them.

Even a learned sage or an exalted hermit who loses his guard in this respect is attacked by these spiritual tormentors that strike a root in his heart. If this can happen to a sage and a hermit, what can be said of ordinary creature¹?

So, is there a way out of this quandary? Yes, there is, and that way is advised in the next verse herein below.] (4)

[Note—¹If wise sages and self-realised hermits aren't spared from the effect of countless spiritual problems enumerated in the aforesaid verses, if they find it difficult to overcome their natural urges for enjoyment of sensual pleasure, it is almost impossible for ordinary creatures to do so. In short, it is extremely difficult to fight these enemies by relying upon one's own strength.

राम कृपाँ नासहिं सब रोगा । जौं एहि भाँति बनै संयोगा ॥ ५ ॥

सदगुर बैद बचन बिस्वासा । संजम यह न बिषय कै आसा ॥ ६ ॥

rāma kṛpāṁ nāsaḥiṁ saba rōgā. jāuṁ ēhi bhāmṭi banai sanyōgā. 5.
sadagura baida bacana bisvāsā. sañjama yaha na biṣaya kai āsā. 6.

All these diseases can be eliminated by the grace of Lord Ram. The Lord's kindness creates a favourable combination of circumstances as described in brief now, which together help the creature to eradicate this disease. (5)

[The various fortunate circumstances are now listed.] One must have faith in the words of his wise Guru (moral preceptor and advisor) who is true himself and has truthful knowledge (*sadagura*). Such a Guru represents a doctor who helps the patient to overcome his disease¹.

Both the aspirant and his preceptor should not desire anything from the world; neither of them should find attraction in the sense objects of the world nor expect to derive enjoyment, comfort and pleasure from them. This is the observance of proper precaution and a symbolic regimen of diet that helps to fight the virus of the disease². (6)

[Note—¹When a person falls sick, the primary step is to find a competent doctor who is an expert in his field; not a quack who would kill the patient. Once a good doctor is found, the patient must trust him even as he leaves his life in the doctor's hands. The

doctor is the person who knows best what to do and how to cure the disease; the patient should not override the doctor's advice if he wants to cure himself, but follow his instructions faithfully. Likewise, once a good and true Guru is found, the spiritual aspirant should diligently follow the advice given by the Guru.

²To wit, one should practice the glorious virtue of self-restraint in its entirety if one wishes to eradicate his spiritual problems from their roots. Refer verse no. 4 in this context. This verse implies that one of the signs of a good Guru is that he practices what he preaches.]

रघुपति भगति सजीवन मूरी । अनूपान श्रद्धा मति पूरी ॥ ७ ॥

एहि बिधि भलेहिं सो रोग नसाहीं । नाहिं त जतन कोटि नहिं जाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

raghupati bhagati sajjivana mūrī. anūpāna śrad'dhā mati pūrī. 7.

ēhi bidhi bhalēhiṁ sō rōga nasāhīṁ. nāhiṁ ta jatana kōṭi nahīṁ jāhīṁ. 8.

Devotion for and worship of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) is like the life-giving herb known as 'Sanjivani' that is used a recipe to treat the disease¹.

A devout mind and an intellect that is infused with faith and belief in the Lord is the medium by which the remedy is administered². (7)

[Note—¹This herb has a magical power to revive a person even if he is on the death-bed. It has tremendous rejuvenating potentials. To wit, devotion for and worship of Lord Ram acts as the chief medicine to treat one's spiritual torments.

²Even in modern medicine, some medium is employed to administer the basic drug or its necessary ingredients to the patient. It may be in the form of a tablet or a capsule or a liquid that is taken orally, or some form of a liquid that is injected directly in the blood. But a medium is needed nonetheless; raw drug can't be administered to the patient. In this metaphor, a devout mind that has faith in the Lord God is the medium by which worship and devotion is made possible.]

This is the way (as outlined herein above) by which these diseases can be eradicated; otherwise there is no chance at all even by making countless other types of efforts. (8)

जानिअ तब मन बिरुज गोसाँई । जब उर बल बिराग अधिकाई ॥ ९ ॥

सुमति छुधा बाढ़इ नित नई । बिषय आस दुर्बलता गई ॥ १० ॥

jāni'a taba mana biruja gōsāmī. jaba ura bala birāga adhikāī. 9.

sumati chudhā bārha'i nita naī. biṣaya āsa durbalatā gaī. 10.

Oh Lord (gōsāmī)! One should regard the Mana (mind and sub-conscious) as being free from all diseases (emotional and spiritual problems) when these symptoms manifest themselves: The virtue of 'Vairagya' (renunciation, detachment, dispassion) is strengthened (becomes firmly rooted) in one's heart [9]; the intellect that is pure and free from all corruptions and taints ignites appetite (desire) for acquisition of

wisdom and true knowledge; and weakness in the form of desire for enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the world is overcome [10]¹. (9-10)

[Note—¹When the proper medicine is administered to a patient he begins to recover from his disease. Here since this disease is not a physical disease of the body but problems of the mind and heart that affect the spiritual well-being of a creature, the three chief signs that indicate that he is progressing satisfactorily are listed in these two verses. When a person is sick he loses his hunger; when he is cured the first sign is reappearance of his appetite. So likewise, when a person is overcome with spiritual problems, he loses all interest in wisdom and self-realisation. When he recovers from his fallen position, he once again begins to pursue the path of wisdom and knowledge. The virtue of renunciation helps him in this path. The temptations of the world acted as a drag upon his progress, but once he is wisened he overcomes this hurdle too.]

बिमल ग्यान जल जब सो नहाई । तब रह राम भगति उर छाई ॥ ११ ॥
 सिव अज सुक सनकादिक नारद । जे मुनि ब्रह्म बिचार बिसारद ॥ १२ ॥
 सब कर मत खगनायक एहा । करिअ राम पद पंकज नेहा ॥ १३ ॥
 श्रुति पुरान सब ग्रंथ कहाहीं । रघुपति भगति बिना सुख नाही ॥ १४ ॥

bimala gyāna jala jaba sō nahā'ī. taba raha rāma bhagati ura chā'ī. 11.
 siva aja suka sanakādika nārada. jē muni brahma bicāra bisārada. 12.
 saba kara mata khaganāyaka ēhā. kari'a rāma pada paṅkaja nēhā. 13.
 śruti purāna saba grantha kahāhīm. raghupati bhagati binā sukha nāhīm. 14.

In this way, when the creature finally recovers from his spiritual and emotional diseases, he would need to take a symbolic bath to clean and freshen himself just in the manner of a person who needs to take a bath after he recovers from a long-drawn fever which lasted for a long period of time.

The water needed for this symbolic bath (of spiritual rejuvenation) is in the form of wisdom, true knowledge, enlightenment and self-realisation (**bimala gyāna jala**). Having bathed and refreshed himself thus, the aspirant feels spiritual rejuvenated as he finds devotion and affection for Lord Ram spreading and covering the whole of his heart. (11)

Lord Shiva, the creator Brahma (aja), sage Suka (the parrot saint), the celestial sages Sankadi and Narad, and other such exalted sages who are experts in the knowledge of Brahm (the Supreme Being) --- (12)

--- It is their unanimous view, oh the king of birds (khaganāyaka), that one should have devotion and affection for the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram. (13)

The Vedas, the Purans and all other scriptures unequivocally assert that there is no happiness and peace without having devotion (Bhakti) for Lord Ram. (14)

कमठ पीठ जामहिं बरु बारा । बंध्या सुत बरु काहुहि मारा ॥ १५ ॥

फूलहिं नभ बरु बहुबिधि फूला । जीव न लह सुख हरि प्रतिकूला ॥ १६ ॥

kamaṭha pīṭha jāmahiṁ baru bārā. bandhyā suta baru kāhuhi mārā. 15.
phūlahiṁ nabha baru bahubidhi phūlā. jīva na laha sukha hari pratikūlā. 16.

It may be remotely possible that hairs grow on the back of a tortoise, or a son born of a barren woman (who cannot produce children), or many types of flowers bloom in the sky¹—but it is absolutely impossible for a Jiva (creature) to find happiness and peace by turning away or being opposed to Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram). (15-16)

[Note—¹These three things are impossible to happen. But even if by some remotest of a miraculous chance these things can materialise, still it is impossible to have peace and happiness by turning against the Lord God. To wit, in all sooth and without gainsay in the least, it is certain that if one does not have devotion for Lord God he cannot have happiness and peace in his life no matter what he does to achieve them; there is no doubt about it.

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115.]

Other instances are given below to stress this point.]

तृषा जाइ बरु मृगजल पाना । बरु जामहिं सस सीस बिषाना ॥ १७ ॥
अंधकारु बरु रबिहि नसावै । राम बिमुख न जीव सुख पावै ॥ १८ ॥

trṣā jā'i baru mṛgajala pānā. baru jāmahiṁ sasa sīsa biṣānā. 17.
andhakāru baru rabihi nasāvai. rāma bimukha na jīva sukha pāvai. 18.

Again, it may be remotely possible to quench one's thirst by drinking water seen in a desert mirage, or horns grow on the head of a rabbit, or darkness of the night destroys the light of the sun and eclipse it (which are impossible things)¹—but it is absolutely impossible for a Jiva (creature) to find happiness and peace by turning away or being opposed to Lord Ram. (17-18)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 72.]

हिम ते अनल प्रगट बरु होई । बिमुख राम सुख पाव न कोई ॥ १९ ॥

hima tē anala pragaṭa baru hō'ī. bimukha rāma sukha pāva na kō'ī. 19.

Yet again, it may be remotely possible that fire erupts from ice—but it is absolutely impossible to be happy and peaceful by turning against or be opposed to Lord Ram (i.e. not having devotion, affection and faith in the Lord; not submitting to the Lord and worshipping him). (19)

दो०. बारि मथें घृत होइ बरु सिकता ते बरु तेल ।

बिनु हरि भजन न भव तरिअ यह सिद्धांत अपेल ॥ १२२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

bāri mathēm ghr̥ta hō'i baru sikatā tē baru tēla.

binu hari bhajana na bhava tari'a yaha sid'dhānta apēla. 122 (a).

[Other impossible things are cited here.] It may be remotely possible to extract clarified butter (known as Ghee) by churning water, or oil by crushing sand particles (like one can extract oil by crushing the seeds of sesame or any other oil-bearing plant)—but it is absolutely impossible to cross this vast and intractable ocean-like world of transmigration without worshipping (and having devotion for) Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram)¹. This is an inviolable principle, and there is no exception to it. (Doha no. 122-a)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 90 where a similar idea is expressed.]

मसकहि करइ बिरंचि प्रभु अजहि मसक ते हीन ।

अस बिचारि तजि संसय रामहि भजहिं प्रबीन ॥ १२२ (ख) ॥

masakahī kara'i biran̄ci prabhu ajahi masaka tē hīna.

asa bicāri taji sansaya rāmahi bhajahim̄ prabīna. 122 (b).

The almighty, omnipotent and all-able Lord God (Sri Ram) can transform the humblest of creatures like a mosquito into someone as exalted, honourable and great as the Creator known as Biranchi (Lord Brahma, the first of the Trinity of Gods), and at the same time can degrade Brahma into a lowly and inconsequential form of a mosquito.

Keeping this in mind, a wise and clever person is one who abandons all doubts and confusions in this regard, and instead concentrates on worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram. (Doha no. 122-b)

श्लोक. विनिश्चितं वदामि ते न अन्यथा वचांसि मे ।

हरिं नरा भजन्ति येऽतिदुस्तरं तरन्ति ते ॥ १२२ (ग) ॥

ślōka.

vinīścitaṁ vadāmi tē na an'yathā vacānsi mē.

hariṁ narā bhajanti yē 'tidustaraṁ taranti tē. 122 (c).

I (Kaagbhusund) advice you (Garud) about a principle that is sacrosanct as I have thoroughly tested and verified it to be true, inviolable and unchallengable—and my words are true and honest—that those creatures who worship and have devotion for

Lord Hari (Sri Ram) can very easily cross over this formidable ocean-like world of transmigration that is otherwise impossible to cross. (Shloka no. 122-c)

[Note—This is actually the third part of Doha no. 122, but since it is in the Sanskrit language it is named as a ‘Shloka’.]

चौ०. कहेउँ नाथ हरि चरित अनूपा । ब्यास समास स्वमति अनुरूपा ॥ १ ॥

श्रुति सिद्धांत इहइ उरगारी । राम भजिअ सब काज बिसारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahē'um' nātha hari carita anūpā. byāsa samāsa svamati anurūpā. 1.
śruti sid'dhānta iha'i uragārī. rāma bhaji'a saba kāja bisārī. 2.

[The saintly crow Kaagbhusund said to Garud—] Oh Lord (nātha)! I have narrated to you—sometimes in detail and at other times in brief, and in accordance to my understanding and intelligence—the most fascinating, wonderful, pleasant and charming story of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) that is incomparable to any other (in its quotient of divinity, holiness and sacredness). (1)

Oh the Enemy of Serpents (uragārī)! All the Vedas are unanimous in their view and conclude that one should abandon all other religious duties and worship Lord Ram instead¹. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, a wise and clever person is one who does not allow confusions and uncertainties to cloud his mind as to which is the best spiritual path for him. The scriptures have addressed this question for him by asserting that the best and the easiest path by which one can reach one's spiritual destination in life is to offer worship to Lord Ram, have unflinching faith and devotion for the Lord, and submit oneself to the Lord and ask for his grace.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 240; (b) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 23; (c) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 127.]

प्रभु रघुपति तजि सेइअ काही । मोहि से सठ पर ममता जाही ॥ ३ ॥

तुम्ह बिग्यानरूप नहिं मोहा । नाथ कीन्हि मो पर अति छोहा ॥ ४ ॥

prabhu raghupati taji sē'i'a kāhī. mōhi sē saṭha para mamatā jāhī. 3.
tumha bigyānarūpa nahim mōhā. nātha kīnhi mō para ati chōhā. 4.

Say, who else should one have devotion for and faith in, who else should one worship and submit oneself to other than Lord Raghupati (one of the many names of Lord Ram) who has been so selflessly graceful, benevolent and kind upon such a humble and good-for-nothing creature as me (Kaagbhusund)?¹ (3)

Oh Lord (“nātha”--Garud)! You are wise and intelligent (because you are the ‘king of birds’, and a king is deemed to be the most senior person in his realm in all respects).

Surely, there is no delusion in you, and you are not ignorant either. You have been very gracious upon me by showing me such high honour (by coming to my humble hermitage and giving me the honour and respect I don’t deserve by praising me and treating me as a wise soul who can give you spiritual guidance, and then patiently hearing what advice I had to give you). [For this kind act of yours, I express my gratitude and sincere thanks.] (4)

[Note—¹To wit, every Lord or Master favours a servant or subordinate from whom he expects something in return by way of service. Say, who would show affection for a worthless servant just because the latter has surrendered completely to his Lord or Master and has nowhere else to go? In all sooth and without the least gainsay, I can vouch with a raised hand and under oath that there is one such Lord, and he is ‘Lord Ram’. Tell me, what service am I doing to the Lord? I am a crow by body, and I can’t even offer sacrifices to him, or do proper form of worship. I can only remember the Lord and tell his divine story to other birds. That is all I can do. But still the Lord has blessed me with eternal peace, happiness, bliss and beatitude, and I feel completely contented.

I am not even an expert in the scriptures, nor do I do meditation or fire sacrifices, or observe any other religious vows and sacraments. Still Lord Ram has been so gracious and affectionate towards me. What more would a creature want?

A similar idea is expressed by Hanuman when he met Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 7.]

पूँछिहु राम कथा अति पावनि । सुक सनकादि संभु मन भावनि ॥ ५ ॥
सत संगति दुर्लभ संसारा । निमिष दंड भरि एकउ बारा ॥ ६ ॥

pūm’chihu rāma kathā ati pāvani. suka sanakādi sambhu mana bhāvani. 5.
sata saṅgati durlabha sansārā. nimiṣa daṇḍa bhari ēka’u bārā. 6.

You have granted me a rare privilege and an exceptional honour by asking me to narrate the story of Lord Ram which is most sacred, divine and holy. This story is very dear to the heart of such exalted souls as sages Shuka (the parrot-saint who is believed to be the son of the legendary sage Veda Vyas and a narrator of the Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurāṇa), Sankadi (the seven celestial sages said to be sons of the creator Brahma), and Lord Shiva (the wisest amongst the Gods and the third God of the Trinity). (5)

It is rare for someone to have company of good saints for a short while even for once in this world¹. (6)

[Note—¹To wit, availability of true saints are rare in this world, and even if they are available it is rare to have an opportunity to be in their company for some period of time so as to gain something worthwhile from them. This is because a person is so

busy in his routine affairs of life that he can hardly spare some time to spend with saints.]

देखु गरुड़ निज हृदयँ बिचारी । मैं रघुबीर भजन अधिकारी ॥ ७ ॥

सकुनाधम सब भाँति अपावन । प्रभु मोहि कीन्ह बिदित जग पावन ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhu garuṛa nija hṛdayam' bicārī. mair̥ raghubīra bhajana adhikārī. 7.
sakunādhama saba bhām̐ti apāvana. prabhu mōhi kīnha bidita jaga pāvana.
8.

Oh Garud, think deeply and reflect in your heart. Am I in any way worthy of being a devotee of Lord Ram and worship the Lord because I am born as a lowly fellow (a crow) who is the lowest in the hierarchy of birds, and is regarded as being the most unholy and vile amongst their fraternity?

But inspite of this (i.e. though I am incompetent and ineligible to preach spiritual messages), the Lord (Sri Ram) has been so gracious, magnanimous and benevolent upon me that he has elevated me to an exalted stature where I am honoured as the one who has purified the world and cleansed it of its (spiritual) impurities (by being a medium of spreading the divine story of Lord Ram and explaining its hidden message by advising others to worship the Lord and have devotion for him as a means of spiritual fulfilment and attainment of purification of the soul)¹. (7-8)

[Note—¹“To wit, if the Lord can be so nice to a humble creature like me, surely and without gainsay he will also be gracious upon you, Garud, who is an exalted bird as you serve Lord Vishnu as his vehicle, and also because you are a King of the kingdom of birds. Further, if the Lord can show so much affection for a crow who is normally treated with contempt by others, just imagine how much love and affection would the Lord shower upon those creatures who are higher up in the evolutionary ladder. But still a Jiva, the living being, is so foolish that he neglects the Lord!”]

दो०. आजु धन्य मैं धन्य अति जद्यपि सब बिधि हीन ।

निज जन जानि राम मोहि संत समागम दीन ॥ १२३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

āju dhan'ya mair̥ dhan'ya ati jadyapi saba bidhi hīna.
nija jana jāni rāma mōhi santa samāgama dīna. 123 (a).

Though I (Kaagbhusund) am lowly and unworthy by all counts, yet I feel so honoured and privileged today that the gracious Lord (Ram) treated me as 'his very own devotee and a dear follower' by granting me the rare opportunity to have an exalted company of a saintly soul like you (Garud). For this grace of the Lord I thank him repeatedly, I thank you also repeatedly, and at the same time I feel exceptionally blessed and privileged myself. (Doha no. 123-a)

[Note—A similar emotion has been expressed by Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, when Hanuman met him after landing on the soil of the city in search of Sita, the abducted wife of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 7.

This is followed by Hanuman's expression of gratitude for Lord Ram in almost a similar language in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2 and 16 that precede Doha no. 10 with respect to sage Sutikshan; and (ii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 14 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it where Sita has extended her blessing to Hanuman when she realised that he is a sincere devotee of Lord Ram.]

नाथ जथामति भाषेउँ राखेउँ नहिं कछु गोइ ।

चरित सिंधु रघुनायक थाह कि पावइ कोइ ॥ १२३ (ख) ॥

nātha jathāmati bhāṣē'um' rākhē'um' nahim kachu gō'i.
carita sindhu raghunāyaka thāha ki pāva'i kō'i. 123 (b).

Oh Lord (nātha)! I have narrated the divine, holy and sacred story of Lord Ram in accordance to my intellect and understanding. I have not concealed anything I am aware of. But nevertheless, remember this point: the story of Lord Ram (who is also known by the name of Raghunayak) is like a huge ocean which no one can fathom and measure. No one can claim to know it in its entirety.

[Therefore, though I have tried to narrate it in detail and in the best possible way I could, yet I can't claim that my narration is exhaustive or comprehensive.]' (Doha no. 123-b)

चौ०. सुमिरि राम के गुन गन नाना । पुनि पुनि हरष भुसुंड़ि सुजाना ॥ १ ॥

महिमा निगम नेति करि गाई । अतुलित बल प्रताप प्रभुताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sumiri rāma kē guna gana nānā. puni puni haraṣa bhusuṇḍi sujānā. 1.
mahimā nigama nēti kari gāī. atulita bala pratāpa prabhutāī. 2.

The erudite and sagacious Kaagbhusund felt extremely exhilarated and thrilled by remembering the countless stupendous glories of Lord Ram as well as the Lord's profound grace upon him. (1)

He (Kaagbhusund) further said—'The Lord's glories, powers, authority, majesty, greatness, holiness and divinity are so profound and endless that even the Vedas could not fathom them when they concluded by saying "Neti-Neti"—i.e. "not this, not this", or "neither this nor that is sufficient to describe the Lord"¹. (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the Vedas declared that they are incapable to enumerate all the majestic glories and mystical qualities of Lord Ram, and therefore what they say of the Lord is just indicative of his divinity and holiness, but not an exhaustive account

of it. No one should be foolish enough to conclude that the words of praise for the Lord by the Vedas are complete in themselves because there is much more to the Lord than what the Vedas or any other scriptures manage to say about him.

The scriptures tried their best to enumerate and define the glories, the greatness and the majesty of Lord Ram, but no matter how hard they tried they found that whatever they said was like just scratching on the surface of the Lord's stupendity and profoundness. They discovered that their utterances were utterly insufficient to describe even a fraction of the Lord's cosmic majesty and astounding glories. So they surrendered and concluded that all they managed to say of the Lord is not the entire truth about the Lord but only an indication of what the Lord actually is.

Therefore, the phrase "Neti-Neti" means that all the glories that the Vedas narrate about the Lord are just indicative in nature of how great and majestic the Lord is, but they are not exhaustive in themselves, as much more is to be said of the Lord which even these Vedas do not know about.

It would be highly mistaken for anyone to think that since the Vedas are repository of wisdom and knowledge hence their utterances about the Lord God are exhaustive in nature, for they fail to realise that the same Vedas have declared their limitations about the knowledge of the Lord by saying "Neti-Neti". What the Vedas say of the Lord is like the tip of the iceberg, for much remains to be said and known about the Lord which the Vedas aren't capable of.

Lord Ram is the Supreme Being who is beyond the imagination of the mind. All descriptions and all adjective use words, and these words are totally incompetent, inapt and insufficient to describe something that goes beyond the wildest of imaginations of the man. Words cannot restrict an unrestricted entity within the parameter of their meanings and connotations and interpretations.]

सिव अज पूज्य चरन रघुराई । मो पर कृपा परम मृदुलाई ॥ ३ ॥

अस सुभाउ कहूँ सुनउँ न देखउँ । केहि खगोस रघुपति सम लेखउँ ॥ ४ ॥

siva aja pūjya carana raghurā'ī. mō para kṛpā parama mṛdulā'ī. 3.

asa subhā'u kahum̐ suna'um̐ na dēkha'um̐. kēhi khagēsa raghupati sama lēkha'um̐. 4.

The holy feet of Lord Ram (Raghurai) are worshipped and revered by Lord Shiva (the concluder of creation) and Lord Brahma (the creator). I am so fortunate and privileged that the same all-mighty Supreme Lord (Sri Ram) has been so kind, gracious and benevolent upon me. (3)

I have not seen or heard about such a sweet and kind nature of any other Lord or Master anywhere else.

Hence, oh the king of birds (khagēsa), who else can I compare Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) with¹? (4)

[Note—¹To wit, I have reflected deeply in this regard and have concluded that no other God or Lord is as kind, gracious, merciful, benevolent and magnanimous as Lord Ram is in this entire creation. Hence, whom should I worship and before whom should I surrender myself except Lord Ram—tell me yourself?

In Tulsidas' wonderful Book of Prayers known as "Vinai Patrika", verse no. 135, Lord Ram's gracious nature has been described.]

साधक सिद्ध बिमुक्त उदासी । कबि कोबिद कृतग्य संन्यासी ॥ ५ ॥

जोगी सूर सुतापस ग्यानी । धर्म निरत पंडित बिग्यानी ॥ ६ ॥

sādhaka sid'dha bimukta udāsī. kabi kōbida kṛtagya sann'yāsī. 5.
jōgī sūra sutāpasa gyānī. dharma nirata paṇḍita bigyānī. 6.

{In the following verses, Kaagbhusund emphasises the fact that no one can ever hope to find liberation and deliverance for himself from the cycle of birth and death, or emancipation and salvation of his soul, if he does not worship Lord Ram, have faith in and devotion for the Lord, and surrenders himself before him to seek the Lord's grace and mercy.}

Those who are spiritual aspirants and seekers of Truth (sādhaka), those who are mystics and possess special mystical powers and authority (sid'dha), those who are wise ones who have renounced all their attachments and lead a life of total dispassion (bimukta udāsī), those who are learned, erudite and sagacious (kabi kōbida), those who are experts in rituals (kṛtagya), those who have renounced all attachments with their families and focus their attention on self-realisation and acquisition of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment (sann'yāsī), those who are ascetics and practice meditation and contemplation (jōgī), those who regard themselves as powerful and able in all respects (sūra), those who pride themselves in doing penance and austerities (sutāpasa), those who regard themselves as wise, enlightened and self-realised (gyānī), those who are noble and follow the auspicious path of righteousness, probity and propriety (dharma nirata), those who are expert in the knowledge of the scriptures (paṇḍita), those who are intelligent and wise (bigyānī) --- (5-6)

तरहिं न बिनु सेएँ मम स्वामी । राम नमामि नमामि नमामी ॥ ७ ॥

सरन गएँ मो से अघ रासी । होहिं सुद्ध नमामि अबिनासी ॥ ८ ॥

tarahim na binu sē'ēm' mama svāmī. rāma namāmi namāmi namāmī. 7.
sarana ga'ēm' mō sē agha rāsī. hōhim sud'dha namāmi abināsī. 8.

--- Forsooth and without and gainsay, (I can unequivocally assert that) none of them can cross this symbolic ocean of birth-and-death (i.e. the ever-turning cycle of transmigration that traps a creature in this creation and causes so much suffering for him; a cycle from which freedom is next to impossible) without serving, worshipping and having devotion for my dear Lord Sri Ram!¹

I bow my head repeatedly, I pay my obeisance again and again, and I prostrate myself over and over again before such a Supreme Lord as Sri Ram!!² (7)

The eternal and imperishable Great Lord Ram who has been so enormously and selflessly gracious even upon humble creatures like me who are so sinful, evil and

wicked—I once again bow my head and pay my obeisance to such a Lord as Sri Ram who gives shelter to even lowly souls and purifies them³. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the only way a creature can free himself from the vice-like grip of the notorious cycle of life-and-death-and-rebirth so as to attain final deliverance from its horrors, and to find emancipation and salvation for his self, i.e. his Atma or soul, is to devote himself to Lord Ram. That's the only way out.

²The Holy Bible says—“The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my refuge, my stronghold, my shield, and my saviour—worthy to be praised”: 2 Samuel, 22/1-4.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 44.]

दो०. जासु नाम भव भेषज हरन घोर त्रय सूल ।
सो कृपाल मोहि तो पर सदा रहउ अनुकूल ॥ १२४ (क) ॥
dōhā.

jāsu nāma bhava bhēṣaja harana ghōra traya sūla.
sō kṛpāla mōhi tō para sadā raha'u anukūla. 124 (a).

[Invoking Lord Ram's blessings before finally concluding his discourse, Kaagbhusund said to Garud—] The Lord (Sri Ram) whose divine, holy and sacred Name is a powerful remedy against the symbolic disease known as the 'the cycle of birth and death' (in which all the creatures find themselves trapped and suffering interminably), and which can eliminate or neutralise the three types of Great Horrors¹ that continuously torment a creature in this world (while he remains trapped in this aforesaid cycle)—I pray that such a magnanimous and benevolent Lord Ram may always remain gracious and kind upon me as well as you (Garud)! (Doha no. 124-a)

[Note—¹The three Great Horrors are “Adhidaivic” –problems related to opposed gods and stars; “Adhivhautic” –problems related to life in this mortal world; and “Adhyatmic” –spiritual problems. These three problems create a lot of misery for all living beings. Kaagbhusund says that the only solution for this malaise is to take shelter in the holy feet of Lord Ram and use the remedy of Lord's Holy Name by repeating it continuously, chanting or uttering it at all times, and thereby invoking the grace of the Lord which would automatically act as an antidote to all the aforesaid problems.]

सुनि भुसुंढि के बचन सुभ देखि राम पद नेह ।
बोलेउ प्रेम सहित गिरा गरुड़ बिगत संदेह ॥ १२४ (ख) ॥

suni bhusuṇḍi kē bacana subha dēkhi rāma pada nēha.
bōlē'u prēma sahita girā garuṛa bigata sandēha. 124 (b).

Hearing the auspicious words (discourse) of Kaagbhusund, and observing the latter's deep affection, faith and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram, Garud felt extremely glad and emotionally fulfilled. All his doubts were dispelled, and he said in most affectionate terms as follows (in the verses herein below) --- (Doha no. 124-b)

चौ०. मैं कृतकृत्य भयउँ तव बानी । सुनि रघुबीर भगति रस सानी ॥ १ ॥

राम चरन नूतन रति भई । माया जनित बिपति सब गई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mairṁ kṛtakṛtya bhaya'um̐ tava bānī. suni raghubīra bhagati rasa sānī. 1.

rāma carana nūtana rati bha'ī. māyā janita bipati saba ga'ī. 2.

Garud said to Kaagbhusund—‘I have attained the objective of coming here, and feel fulfilled and fully contented by hearing your gracious words (discourse) that were soaked in devotion and affection for Lord Ram (Raghupati). (1)

I have developed a new surge of devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram. All the problems created by ‘Maya’ (delusions and its attendant ignorance) have been now been dispelled; all my consternations and doubts are removed. (2)

मोह जलधि बोहित तुम्ह भए । मो कहँ नाथ बिबिध सुख दए ॥ ३ ॥

मो पहिँ होइ न प्रति उपकारा । बंदउँ तव पद बारहिं बारा ॥ ४ ॥

mōha jaladhi bōhita tumha bha'ē. mō kaham̐ nātha bibidha sukha da'ē. 3.

mō pahim̐ hō'i na prati upakārā. banda'um̐ tava pada bārahim̐ bārā. 4.

Oh Lord (nātha)! I was adrift and lost on the vast ocean symbolised by ‘Moha’ (delusions that attached me to doubts and confusions), and was on the verge of sinking in this fathomless ocean. For me, you have become a ship or a buoy, for you have saved me from drowning in a sea of delusions and its attendant confusions and dilemmas. You have bestowed upon me a lot of joy and beatitude in various ways. (3)

Verily indeed, I feel highly obliged and sincerely indebted to you, and I cannot sufficiently compensate you for what you have done for me and my spiritual welfare, except to bow my head again and again before your august feet as a humble gesture of thanksgiving and expression of gratitude. (4)

पूरन काम राम अनुरागी । तुम्ह सम तात न कोउ बड़भागी ॥ ५ ॥

संत बिटप सरिता गिरि धरनी । पर हित हेतु सबन्ह कै करनी ॥ ६ ॥

pūrana kāma rāma anurāgī. tumha sama tāta na kō'u baṛabhāgī. 5.

santa biṭapa saritā giri dharanī. para hita hētu saban̐ha kai karanī. 6.

You (i.e. sage Kaagbhusund) are fully accomplished and all your spiritual desires have been fulfilled. There is no doubt about it.

Not only this, you have affection for Lord Ram, and the Lord loves you too.

Oh my dear sage (tāta)! Verily, forsooth and without gainsay, who is more fortunate and privileged in this world than you?¹ (5)

Truly indeed, the deeds and actions of saints, trees, rivers, mountains and the earth are always for the good of others². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, no living being, including great sages, is as lucky as sage Kaagbhusund. The reason is that Kaagbhusund has been blessed by Lord Ram himself. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 88.

²Saints always think of others' good and welfare so much so that they would rather prefer to suffer if it helps others. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 121.

The trees offer shade, flowers, fruits and seeds to serve other creatures. Even their own bodies are offered to others by way of firewood and construction material. The skin of the Birch tree is used to make paper and clothes that were worn by hermits in ancient times. A host of birds and insects find their dwelling place in them.

Rivers are the lifelines of human civilisation. They are homes to a complete ecosystem consisting of aquatic plants and animals. Some of them are regarded as very holy: for instance river Ganges and river Yamuna.

Quite like the rivers, the mountains give shelter to huge trees and forests, which in turn are habitats of wildlife. They cause rainfall, are abodes for hermits and ascetics, and offer cooler climes to those who can't bear the heat of the plains. Some of the most important pilgrim centers in India are located there. All the mighty rivers have their origin in the glaciers of the mountains.

The importance of earth is so tremendous that it need not be enumerated. The earth is called 'Mother Earth' simply because it always serves its off-springs, all the creatures who live on or beneath its surface, providing them with all their needs and being a host to them during their life—inspite of the fact that the same off-spring exploits the earth and never even thanks it.

Like all these entities, your life has been spent in providing spiritual guidance to creatures like me who find themselves lost in the thick maze of delusions.

The excellent qualities of true saints have been outlined by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 41.]

संत हृदय नवनीत समाना । कहा कबिन्ह परि कहै न जाना ॥ ७ ॥

निज परिताप द्रवइ नवनीता । पर दुख द्रवहिं संत सुपुनीता ॥ ८ ॥

santa hṛdaya navanīta samānā. kahā kabinha pari kahai na jānā. 7.

nija paritāpa drava'i navanītā. para dukha dravahiṁ santa supunītā. 8.

Expert and learned poets have asserted that the heart of a saint is like pure and freshly produced butter (navanīta). But unfortunately these poets overlooked their

uniqueness, and did not highlight the real quality and outstanding virtue of such exalted saints. [What is it? It is narrated in the next line.] (7)

The butter melts when it is heated on fire, but the heart of exalted saints is so tender and merciful that it melts at the suffering and torments of others. [To wit, even if a saint is not personally subjected to any trouble but he observes others in trouble, his heart begins to wail as if the trouble was being suffered by the saint himself. Their heart has a lot of empathy and sympathy for others.] (8)

जीवन जन्म सुफल मम भयऊ । तव प्रसाद संसय सब गयऊ ॥ ९ ॥

जानेहु सदा मोहि निज किंकर । पुनि पुनि उमा कहइ बिहंगबर ॥ १० ॥

jīvana janma suphala mama bhaya'ū. tava prasāda sansaya saba gaya'ū. 9.
jānēhu sadā mōhi nija kiṅkara. puni puni umā kaha'i bihaṅgabara. 10.

My life and birth in this world have both been rewarded, and I feel honoured, privileged and fulfilled. By your grace, all my doubts and confusions have been erased for good. (9)

Please be kind to always treat me as your faithful and sincere servant (follower and subordinate—“nija kiṅkara”). [To wit, I am now onwards your disciple, and hence I am ready to serve you whenever you need me. So please never ever hesitate to call me to be at your service.]

[Lord Shiva, who was narrating this conversation between Kaagbhusund and Garud to his consort Uma or Parvati, said to her—] ‘Oh Uma! The most exalted amongst the birds (i.e. Garud) felt so extremely grateful towards Kaagbhusund that he repeatedly said these words of submission and gratitude to him¹. (10)

[Note—¹Garud was so overwhelmed with spiritual joy and bliss that he could not find apt words to thank his preceptor Kaagbhusund sufficiently, so he repeatedly bowed his head before the crow-saint and submitted himself before him, vowing to serve Kaagbhusund for life, in any manner he deemed fit.]

दो०. तासु चरन सिरु नाइ करि प्रेम सहित मतिधीर ।

गयउ गरुड़ बैकुंठ तब हृदयँ राखि रघुबीर ॥ १२५ (क) ॥

dōhā.

tāsu carana siru nā'i kari prēma sahita matidhīra.

gaya'u garuṛa baikunṭha taba hṛdayam' rākhi raghubīra. 125 (a).

The enlightened and wisened Garud then bowed his head most reverentially at the feet of Kaagbhusund, enshrined the image of Lord Ram (Raghubir) in his heart, and went away cheerfully to Vaikuntha (his abode in the heaven where he served Lord Vishnu as his dear mount). (Doha no. 125-a)

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The Kaagbhusund Ramayan Or The Aadi Ramayan

EPILOGUE

[Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 125-b—to Doha no. 130.]

गिरिजा संत समागम सम न लाभ कछु आन ।
बिनु हरि कृपा न होइ सो गावहिं बेद पुरान ॥ १२५ (ख) ॥

girijā santa samāgama sama na lābha kachu āna.
binu hari krpā na hō'i sō gāvahim bēda purāna. 125 (b).

[Lord Shiva told his consort Girija or Parvati—] ‘Oh Girija (one of the many name of Lord Shiva’s consort)! There is indeed no gain or good fortune bigger than having the opportunity of company of true saints and communion with them¹. But wise sages have said that this luck cannot be availed of without the grace of Lord Ram.’ (Doha no. 125-b)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 121 where sage Kaagbhusund has also said this thing to Garud.]

चौ०. कहेउँ परम पुनीत इतिहासा । सुनत श्रवन छूटहिं भव पासा ॥ १ ॥
प्रनत कल्पतरु करुना पुंजा । उपजइ प्रीति राम पद कंजा ॥ २ ॥
मन क्रम बचन जनित अघ जाई । सुनहिं जे कथा श्रवन मन लाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kahē'um' parama punīta itihāsā. sunata śravana chūṭahim bhava pāsā. 1.
pranata kalpataru karunā punjā. upaja'i prīti rāma pada kañjā. 2.
mana krama bacana janita agha jā'ī. sunahim jē kathā śravana mana lā'ī. 3.

[Lord Shiva continued—] ‘I have narrated this most holy, divine and sacred story of Lord Ram to you. It is a story by hearing of which a creature is freed from the fetters that shackle him to the formidable cycle of birth and death in this world of transmigration. [To wit, this story of Lord Ram has the magical power to provide spiritual liberation and deliverance to all those who listen to it with due reverence, faith and devotion.] (1)

For all those who submit themselves to Lord Ram and take refuge with him, this wonderful mystical story proves to be an all wish-fulfilling tree of the gods known as Kalpa Tree for it not only fulfils all their desires but also grants them abiding affection for Lord Ram who is most merciful and compassionate, as well as steady devotion for the Lord's lotus-like holy feet. (2)

Those who listen to this divine story of Lord Ram with full attention, devotion and faith, all the sins arising out of the deeds done by the three components of their bodies—such as the sins which have their origin in the evil thoughts of the mind, any sort of evil words spoken by them, as well as any evil actions taken by them—all such sins and their negative effects are neutralised and eliminated.

[Those who have faith in Lord Ram and listen to the story of the Lord with devotion are absolved of all their sins and their consequences. They are spiritually purified, and they become eligible to attain emancipation and salvation for their soul.] (3)

तीर्थाटन साधन समुदाई । जोग बिराग ग्यान निपुनाई ॥ ४ ॥

नाना कर्म धर्म ब्रत दाना । संजम दम जप तप मख नाना ॥ ५ ॥

भूत दया द्विज गुर सेवकाई । बिद्या बिनय बिबेक बड़ाई ॥ ६ ॥

tīrthāṭana sādhanā samudā'ī. jōga birāga gyāna nipunā'ī. 4.

nānā karma dharma brata dānā. sañjama dama japa tapa makha nānā. 5.

bhūta dayā dvija gura sēvakā'ī. bidyā binaya bibēka baṛā'ī. 6.

{Now in these verses are listed some of the best means prescribed by the scriptures by which a creature can attain spiritual blessedness and eternal bliss, and then goes on to say that the best reward of all these practices is to have abiding and true Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram. This virtue of 'Bhakti' proves to the legendary Kalpa Tree for the devotee as it fulfils all his desires, both the temporal as well as the spiritual.}

There are indeed many spiritual path (prescribed by the Vedas) that are all meritorious and effective in themselves (sādhanā samudā'ī). Some of them are the following: Pilgrimage to holy places (tīrthāṭana), doing Yoga (meditation that leads to the union of the individual's soul with the Supreme Cosmic Soul— jōga), practicing the virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion (birāga), becoming an expert in wisdom and knowledge leading to enlightenment and self-realisation (gyāna nipunā'ī) --- (4)

Doing various kinds of meritorious religious deeds, undertaking many kinds of religious observances and vows, practicing numerous religious rites and sacraments (nānā karma), following the righteous path that is auspicious, proper and noble (dharma), keeping vows (brata), making charities and donations (dānā), practicing strict self-control over one's sense organs and diligently observing the principles of self-restraint and abstinence from all sorts of indulgences (sañjama dama), saying of prayers and repeating holy spiritual formulas (japa), doing penance and observing austerity (tapa), doing various fire sacrifices (makha nānā)--- (5)

Being merciful and compassionate towards other living beings (bhūta dayā), doing service to those who are elderly, learned and wise, as well as serving one's teacher and preceptor (dvija gura sēvakā'ī), possessing the virtues of wisdom and true knowledge (and honouring those who possess these qualities) (bidyā), being polite and humble (binaya), having intelligence and prudence (bibēka), and honouring others who have any of these glorious virtues (baṛā'ī). (6)

जहँ लगि साधन बेद बखानी । सब कर फल हरि भगति भवानी ॥ ७ ॥
सो रघुनाथ भगति श्रुति गाई । राम कृपाँ काहूँ एक पाई ॥ ८ ॥

jaham' lagi sādhana bēda bakhānī. saba kara phala hari bhagati bhavānī. 7.
sō raghunātha bhagati śruti gā'ī. rāma kṛpām' kāhūm' ēka pā'ī. 8.

Oh Bhavani (which is one of the many names of Lord Shiva's consort)! Whatever kind of spiritual means that the Vedas have prescribed and described, all have one thing in common, and it is this: the best reward that a creature gets by practicing them is to be blessed by having Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Hari (Lord God; Lord Ram) (7)

But this Bhakti for Lord Raghunath (the Lord of the Raghus; one of the many names of Sri Ram) is attainable only rarely by someone upon whom Lord Ram has become benevolent and graceful¹. (8)

[Note—¹The best reward of practicing all the religious and meritorious deeds prescribed by the Vedas is to find spiritual blessedness by way of having devotion for Lord Ram. But this eclectic reward is attainable only if the Lord shows his grace upon the fortunate creature.]

दो०. मुनि दुर्लभ हरि भगति नर पावहिं बिनहिं प्रयास ।
जे यह कथा निरंतर सुनहिं मानि बिस्वास ॥ १२६ ॥
dōhā.

muni durlabha hari bhagati nara pāvahiṁ binahiṁ prayāsa.
jē yaha kathā nirantara sunahiṁ māni bisvāsa. 126.

That eclectic spiritual reward known as 'Bhakti' which is difficult even for great sages and seers to obtain (inspite of making so many efforts as enumerated in the aforesaid verses), is however easily and readily available, without the least difficulty, to those persons who regularly hear this sacred story of Lord Ram with faith and devotion. (Doha no. 126)

चौ०. सोइ सर्बग्य गुनी सोइ ग्याता । सोइ महि मंडित पंडित दाता ॥ १ ॥
धर्म परायन सोइ कुल त्राता । राम चरन जा कर मन राता ॥ २ ॥
caupā'ī.

sō'i sarbagya gunī sō'i gyātā. sō'i mahi maṇḍita paṇḍita dātā. 1.
dharma parāyana sō'i kula trātā. rāma carana jā kara mana rātā. 2.

A person who has devotion for Lord Ram's holy feet, if he worships the Lord's holy feet and has reverence for them (rāma carana jā kara mana rātā) then he is deemed to be all-knowing and omniscient (sō'i sarbagya), is said to possess excellent virtues and character (gunī), is regarded as most wise, realised and an expert in all spiritual knowledge and skills (sō'i gyātā), is like an ornament of the world (mahī maṇḍita) as he is the most exalted and an enlightened being (paṇḍita), is very munificent and generous as he is a bestower of knowledge and can grant blessings upon others (dātā), is a follower of the auspicious path of righteousness, probity, propriety, and noble conduct and thought (dharma parāyana), and is regarded as a saviour of his entire clan and race (sō'i kula trātā). (1-2)

नीति निपुन सोइ परम सयाना । श्रुति सिद्धांत नीक तेहिं जाना ॥ ३ ॥
सोइ कबि कोबिद सोइ रनधीरा । जो छल छाड़ि भजइ रघुबीरा ॥ ४ ॥

nīti nipuna sō'i parama sayānā. śruti sid'dhānta nīka tēhim jānā. 3.
sō'i kabi kōbida sō'i ranadhīrā. jō chala chāḍi bhaja'i raghubīrā. 4.

A person who worships Lord Ram sincerely, without pretensions or deceit, and with a pure inner-self (jō chala chāḍi bhaja'i raghubīrā) is regarded as being an expert in spiritual principles as well as the most wise and enlightened soul in this field (nīti nipuna sō'i parama sayānā).

Verily indeed, such a person is deemed to be well-versed in the essence of the Vedas as he understands correctly and fully the meaning and objective of their teaching (śruti sid'dhānta nīka tēhim jānā).

Forsooth, such a person is perfect in learning and knowledge, and hence a perfect seer; he is most sagacious and erudite (sō'i kabi kōbida).

And he is so steadfast in his belief and faith that he is not affected by his detractors, or deflected from his path by delusions and confusions (sō'i ranadhīrā). (3-4)

धन्य देस सो जहँ सुरसरी । धन्य नारि पतिव्रत अनुसरी ॥ ५ ॥
धन्य सो भूपु नीति जो करई । धन्य सो द्विज निज धर्म न टरई ॥ ६ ॥

dhan'ya dēsa sō jaham' surasari. dhan'ya nāri patibrata anusari. 5.
dhan'ya sō bhūpu nīti jō kara'i. dhan'ya sō dvija nija dharma na ṭara'i. 6.

That land is blessed and fortunate where the holy river Ganges flows.

That wife is blessed and fortunate who is loyal to her husband and observes the vows of fidelity. (5)

That king is blessed and fortunate who follows the principles of law and probity, and rules his kingdom accordingly.

That Brahmin (dvija) is blessed and fortunate who does not falter in his duties and swerves away from his righteous path no matter what happens or what the provocation is. (6)

सो धन धन्य प्रथम गति जाकी । धन्य पुन्य रत मति सोइ पाकी ॥ ७ ॥

धन्य घरी सोइ जब सतसंगा । धन्य जन्म द्विज भगति अभंगा ॥ ८ ॥

sō dhana dhan'ya prathama gati jākī. dhan'ya pun'ya rata mati sō'i pākī. 7.
dhan'ya gharī sō'i jaba satasaṅgā. dhan'ya janma dvija bhagati abhaṅgā. 8.

That wealth is blessed and well acquired which is destined for some auspicious purpose (such as in making charity or helping others who are in distress)¹.

That intellect is deemed to be refined and ripe which is pure and free from taints, and is involved in doing meritorious things. (7)

That moment is blessed and fortunate when has the company of true saints and is able to interact with them.

And that birth is blessed and fortunate in which a person practices constant service of Brahmins (i.e. those who are learned and wise in the society)². (8)

[Note—¹Wealth has the following destinations— it is used to benefit others and help them in their need; it is hoarded and is of no use to anyone, and in due course of time it decays; it is squandered away in luxury and pleasure; it is used, directly or indirectly, to harm the interest of others.

However, the best use of wealth is that it is shared with others and is used to alleviate the suffering of those in distress. The worst use of wealth is to hoard it and let it decay. The medium level of use of the wealth has varying degrees of goodness or futility according to the use to which it is put. For instance, if it is employed for meeting basic needs of life, it is comparatively a good use of wealth, but if it is used for luxury and sensual pleasures it is not only wasted away in futile pursuits but creates a negative and degrading impact on the future of the owner.

²The word “Brahmin” has its root in ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being. A true Brahmin is a representative of Brahm in the sense that he is spiritually empowered, highly wise, enlightened, self-realised, erudite, sagacious, contented and fulfilled. Such a Brahmin is deemed to be a personified form of Brahm, and service to this Brahmin is synonymous with service to Brahm.

In this sense this statement means that a person is deemed to be blessed and fortunate if he serves a Brahmin with the insight that while doing so he is actually serving Brahm, the Supreme Being.

Hence, through the form of a human being called a “Brahmin”, a wise person is actually worshipping Lord God, the supreme Brahm.]

दो०. सो कुल धन्य उमा सुनु जगत पूज्य सुपुनीत ।

श्रीरघुबीर परायन जेहिं नर उपज बिनीत ॥ १२७ ॥

dōhā.

sō kula dhan'ya umā sunu jagata pūjya supunīta.
śrīraghubīra parāyana jēhim nara upaja binīta. 127.

[Lord Shiva told his consort—] Listen Uma! In this world, that family or clan or race is deemed to be blessed and fortunate, exalted and pure, and worthy of respect, honour and glory, in which are born people who are pious, humble and sincerely devoted to Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram). (Doha no. 127)

चौ०. मति अनुरूप कथा मैं भाषी । जद्यपि प्रथम गुप्त करि राखी ॥ १ ॥
तव मन प्रीति देखि अधिकाई । तब मैं रघुपति कथा सुनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mati anurūpa kathā mair̥ bhāṣī. jadyapi prathama gupta kari rākhī. 1.
tava mana prīti dēkhi adhikāī. taba mair̥ raghupati kathā sunāī. 2.

I have narrated this divine, holy and sacred story (of Lord Ram) according to the best abilities of my intellect, though I had previously kept it secret (after conceiving it in my heart). (1)

When I observed a lot of affection in your heart and found that you are sincerely eager to hear it, I decided to tell (or share, divulge this secret) to you¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.]

यह न कहिअ सठही हठसीलहि । जो मन लाइ न सुन हरि लीलहि ॥ ३ ॥
कहिअ न लोभिहि क्रोधिहि कामिहि । जो न भजइ सचराचर स्वामिहि ॥ ४ ॥

yaha na kahi'a saṭhahī haṭhasīlahi. jō mana lā'i na suna hari līlahi. 3.
kahi'a na lōbhihi krōdhihi kāmihī. jō na bhaja'i sacarācara svāmihi. 4.

{Now, the following verses list some category of people who should not be told this glorious story of Lord Ram.}

This story should not be narrated before those who are wicked and pervert in their heart and mind. It should not be told to those who are stubborn sceptics who are unable to overcome their preconceived distorted notions about the Lord and spiritual values. Nor should it be recounted to those people who do not listen to the glorious deeds of Lord Hari with attention, faith and interest¹. (3)

Similarly, it should not be told to those who are greedy (for worldly gains), are inclined to be angry (because they would never agree with things that don't suit their pervert minds), and are lustful (for worldly pleasures)².

It should also not be narrated to those who do not worship, don't have faith in and don't adore the almighty Lord of the entire universe (for such people are non-believers and heretics who would find pleasure in demeaning and ridiculing the holy story to the best of their abilities)³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 39; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 113.

The basic idea in these verses is that those who are wicked and pervert would first won't understand the story and its spiritual message, then find numerous faults with it, and after that if someone comes to them for advice they would discourage him from listening to it by vociferously criticising the story.

In this situation, it is like poisoning the lake of nectar by allowing ineligible people to take a bath in it. Such people do more harm than any worthwhile good.

The reason is that these sceptics would ridicule the divine story, they would mock and deride it, find fault with it, and would kill the very purpose for which it is being narrated in the first place—i.e. to help a creature find spiritual bliss and happiness, to help him overcome the numerous torments and miseries from which his heart and mind are suffering in this world, and to help him attain liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death by awakening his dormant spiritual qualities that would make him self-realised and enlightened about his 'true self', which is pure consciousness, and its oneness with the supreme Self or the cosmic Consciousness represented by Lord Ram.

²Those who are “greedy” would exploit this spiritual story to make pecuniary gains and self-enrichment, instead of explaining the subtle spiritual message that it contains, thereby killing its main objective.

Those who have the habit of getting “angry” would argue with the narrator and teacher who is narrating and explaining the story to them if they don't agree with some point, or put forward absurd propositions and arguments to contradict the story, leading to exchange of heated words and generally vitiating the atmosphere, creating ill-will and malice all around.

Again, those who are “lustful” will find it hard to stomach the spiritual message of renunciation, dispassion and detachment from the world and its sensual pleasures, and so would vehemently oppose the story.

³Heretics and non-believers will mock at the story and say it is a cock-and-bull imagination of the mind. They would find tonnes of contradictions in the narrative, and say for instance “well, how can the Supreme Being become a man?” There is no wonder they would do so, for even Garud, who is so close to Lord Vishnu as he is the Lord's personal attendant and mount, too had been confused about the reality of Lord Ram. This is the reason why he had gone to Kaagbhusund to hear the story of Lord Ram.

But Garud was not a non-believer; he was simply confused. He wanted clarifications; he was receptive and willing to learn. And that is why he could grasp the hidden meaning of the story when explained by Kaagbhusund.

Heretics, sceptics and non-believers, those who are extremely orthodox and of a fanatical mind, those who are too stubborn to listen to anybody else or any thing that contradicts their preconceived and dogmatic ideas of what constitutes true religion, should not be told this story of Lord Ram. Like the Pharisees who derided Jesus Christ especially according to the Gospel of St. John, those who have no devotion and affection for Lord Ram would denigrate the story of the Lord, prick holes in it, deride, mock and insinuate it no end. Hence, it is best to avoid telling this mystical story to them.]

द्विज द्रोहिहि न सुनाइअ कबहूँ । सुरपति सरिस होइ नृप जबहूँ ॥ ५ ॥
राम कथा के तेइ अधिकारी । जिन्ह कें सतसंगति अति प्यारी ॥ ६ ॥

dvija drōhihi na sunā'i'a kabahūṁ. surapati sarisa hō'i nṛpa jabahūṁ. 5.
rāma kathā kē tē'i adhikārī. jinha kēm satasaṅgati ati pyārī. 6.

This story should not to narrated before those who are opposed to Brahmins and harbour hatred for them (dvija drōhihi) even if such people are very highly placed like being a king of the realm, and even among the kings may be occupying an exalted stature equivalent to the king of gods known as Indra (surapati)¹. (5)

[Now are listed those persons who are eligible to hear the story of Lord Ram.]

Those who love to have communion with saints and keep their company are the ones who are eligible to hear the (divine, holy and sacred) story of Lord Ram². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, one should not be afraid to refuse to tell this story to an ineligible person out of fear of punishment just because the latter is as powerful and strong like a king.]

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precedes Doha no. 3; (iii) Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 37; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 39; (b) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38; (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 39; and (vi) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 61.]

गुर पद प्रीति नीति रत जेई । द्विज सेवक अधिकारी तेई ॥ ७ ॥
ता कहँ यह बिसेष सुखदाई । जाहि प्रानप्रिय श्रीरघुराई ॥ ८ ॥

gura pada prīti nīti rata jē'i. dvija sēvaka adhikārī tē'i. 7.
tā kaham̐ yaha bisēṣa sukhadā'i. jāhi prānapriya śrīraghurā'i. 8.

Again, those who have reverence for the feet of their Guru (moral preceptor and teacher)¹, those who strictly follow principles of righteous conduct and propriety², those who serve Brahmins³ are the ones who are eligible to hear this story (of Lord Ram). (7)

Further, for those who love and have affection for Lord Raghubir (Sri Ram) like they have for their own selves are the ones who find exceptional charm, delight, happiness, bliss and contentedness in hearing this story of Lord⁴. (8)

[Note—¹Regarding Guru: refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 2.

²Regarding those who follow rules of law and good conduct: refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23.

³Regarding Brahmin: refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2.

⁴Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no.6 that precedes Doha no. 9 which is very specific in reiterating this fact.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 126.]

दो०. राम चरन रति जो चह अथवा पद निर्बान ।

भाव सहित सो यह कथा करउ श्रवन पुट पान ॥ १२८ ॥

dōhā.

rāma carana rati jō caha athavā pada nirbāna.

bhāva sahita sō yaha kathā kara'u śravana puṭa pāna. 128.

He who wishes to have steady and true devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram (representing the Supreme Being and the almighty Lord God), or he who wishes to attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his soul and find oneness with the Supreme Being, should reverentially hear this (nectar like) divine story of the Lord by symbolically converting his ears into a cup (with which this nectar is drunk by him)¹. (Doha no. 128)

[Note—¹Here, the ‘ears’ are likened to a cup with which one drinks something. The divine story of Lord Ram is like the nectar of bliss and beatitude for the soul, a drink that provides eternity to the soul and liberates it from all its miseries and torments. Just like one needs a cup to drink a liquid, or better still to sip a sweet nectar-like delicious drink, a person who wants eternal peace and bliss for himself should hear the story of Lord Ram attentively and with due devotion.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 15.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 113 it is said that the ears of those who do not listen to the glorious story of Lord Ram are like the dark foreboding holes where poisonous snakes live.

It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 113 that body of a person is good for nothing if he does not listen to the Lord Ram’s glories with his ears, if he does not use his eyes to see great saints who have realised the Lord, if he does not worship him and bows his head reverentially before the Lord, if he does not sing the glories of Lord Ram with his tongue, and if he does not feel exhilarated in his heart by having devotion for the Lord.

In brief, if a living being is devoid of devotion and affection for the Lord, then his entire being is wasted away in futile worldly pursuits, landing his soul in the vicious grip of the cycle of birth and death with its attendant chain of endless miseries, grief, pain, horrors and torments.]

चौ०. राम कथा गिरिजा में बरनी । कलि मल समनि मनोमल हरनी ॥ १ ॥
संसृति रोग सजीवन मूरी । राम कथा गावहिं श्रुति सूरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma kathā girijā maiṁ baranī. kali mala samani manōmala haranī. 1.
samsṛti rōga sajjivana mūrī. rāma kathā gāvahiṁ śruti sūrī. 2.

[Concluding his discourse to goddess ‘Girija’, which is one of the many names of the consort of Lord Shiva, he said to her—] Oh Girija (girijā)! I have narrated to you the story of Lord Ram, which is at once divine, holy and sacred as well as magnificent, fascinating and sweet to hear, which is mystically empowered to dispel all the sins and their horrible consequences that are integral to life in the era of Kaliyug, and which is able to cleanse the creature’s inner-self of all spiritual taints and blemishes in order to make it pure and holy. (1)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, wise ones and the scriptures such as the Vedas assert unequivocally and unanimously that this glorious story of Lord Ram is like the mystical medicinal herb known as ‘Sanjivani’ that can liberate the creature from the torments of the horrifying disease symbolised by the cycle of birth and death. [Nay, it can actually cure the disease itself!] (2)

एहि महँ रुचिर सप्त सोपाना । रघुपति भगति केर पंथाना ॥ ३ ॥
अति हरि कृपा जाहि पर होई । पाउँ देइ एहिं मारग सोई ॥ ४ ॥

ēhi maham̐ rucira sapta sōpānā. raghupati bhagati kēra panthānā. 3.
ati hari kṛpā jāhi para hōī. pā'um̐ dē'i ēhiṁ māraga sōī. 4.

This wonderfully magnificent story has seven Cantos or Chapters (known as the “Kands or Kāṇds”)¹. These are like the seven symbolic steps or milestones in the spiritual path that finally lead to attainment of devotion for Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram). (3)

Only he upon whom Lord Hari (Lord Ram) is extremely munificent and gracious is able to step on this path². (4)

[Note—¹The ‘Seven Chapters’ are the following: Baal Kand, Ayodhya Kand, Aranya Kand, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand, Lanka Kand, and Uttar Kand.

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 38 along with Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes it where an exactly similar idea is expressed.]

मन कामना सिद्धि नर पावा । जे यह कथा कपट तजि गावा ॥ ५ ॥
कहहिं सुनिहिं अनुमोदन करहीं । ते गोपद इव भवनिधि तरहीं ॥ ६ ॥

mana kāmanā sid'dhi nara pāvā. jē yaha kathā kapaṭa taji gāvā. 5.
kahahīm sunahīm anumōdana karahīm. tē gōpada iva bhavanidhi tarahīm. 6.

A person who sings or narrates this story with sincerity and without deception in his heart¹ is able to fulfil all his wishes (both spiritual as well as temporal). (5)

A person who hears, narrates and praises (or endorses) this story of the Lord is able to cross this vast and fathomless ocean symbolised by the endless cycle of birth and death (or the world of transmigration) as easily as crossing a small and shallow groove made on the surface of earth by the hoof of a cow². (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 38; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 126; (ii) Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 129.

This analogy of the ‘groove made on earth by the cow’s hoof’ is to imply that one can cross this endless ocean-like world of transmigration to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul by hearing, narrating and praising the Lord’s story as easily and effortlessly as one crosses a very small puddle of water that one finds in his path leading to his destination. This puddle is made due to the hollow carved out on the earth by the hoof of the cow, but it is so small and shallow that it does not even merit any attention as one walks steadily towards his destination.]

सुनि सब कथा हृदय अति भाई । गिरिजा बोली गिरा सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥
नाथ कृपाँ मम गत संदेहा । राम चरन उपजेउ नव नेहा ॥ ८ ॥

suni saba kathā hṛdaya ati bhā'ī. girijā bōlī girā suhā'ī. 7.
nātha kṛpām̐ mama gata sandēhā. rāma carana upajā'u nava nēhā. 8.

{Now we go back to the time when the great sage Yagyavalkya had started narrating the story of Lord Ram, known as the “Ram Charit Manas”, to sage Bharadwaj when the latter expressed his desire to hear it. Yagyavalkya had used the conversation between Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati to narrate the story of Lord Ram to Bharadwaj. This background of the revelation of this story of Lord Ram is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 47; and then from Chaupai line nos. 4 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113.

This narration is completed here when sage Yagyavalkya told sage Bharadwaj that goddess Parvati felt extremely exhilarated, emotionally fulfilled, and spiritually blessed when Lord Shiva concluded telling the story of Lord Ram to her. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 130 herein below.}

[Sage Yagyavalkya told sage Bharadwaj—] ‘This whole story of Lord Ram was extremely loved by goddess Girija (also known as Parvati or Uma; the consort of Lord

Shiva) in her heart. [To wit, goddess Girija's heart felt euphoric when she had heard the full story of Lord Ram narrated to her by her husband, Lord Shiva.]

She delightfully said to Lord Shiva in a sweet tone [7], “Oh Lord (nātha)! By your grace and munificence, I have overcome my delusions and doubts¹, and I have been able to establish renewed devotion, faith and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram² [8]. (7-8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 111.

In these verses we read how and why Parvati had developed doubts about the real identity of Lord Ram as a manifested form of the Supreme Being himself. When she had heard the entire story and explanations from her husband Lord Shiva, all her misgivings were removed. There was renewed devotion and affection for Lord Ram in her heart, and all confusions in her mind were dispelled.]

दो०. मैं कृतकृत्य भइउँ अब तव प्रसाद बिस्वेस ।
उपजी राम भगति दृढ़ बीते सकल कलेस ॥ १२९ ॥
dōhā.

maim kṛtakṛtya bhaṭ'um'aba tava prasāda bisvēsa.
upajī rāma bhagati dṛṛha bītē sakala kalēsa. 129.

[Goddess expressed her sincere thanks and gratitude to Lord Shiva by saying—] Oh Lord of the Universe (“bisvēsa”—i.e. Lord Shiva)! By your grace and benevolence, I am now feeling spiritually accomplished, fulfilled and contented.

I have been able to establish firm devotion and affection for Lord Ram (in my heart and mind; in my inner-self), and (as a reward of this) all my (spiritual) torments and afflictions have vanished for good.” (Doha no. 129)

चौ०. यह सुभ संभु उमा संबादा । सुख संपादन समन बिषादा ॥ १ ॥
भव भंजन गंजन संदेहा । जन रंजन सज्जन प्रिय एहा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

yaha subha sambhu umā sambādā. Sukha sampādana samana biṣādā. 1.
bhava bhanjana ganjana sandēhā. Jana ranjana sajjana priya ēhā. 2.

[Sage Yagyavalkya made these observations to sum-up his narration of the story of Lord Ram. Here he briefly outlines the rewards of hearing this divine, sacred and holy story of the Lord.

Yagyavalkya told sage Bharadwaj—] ‘This spiritually enlightening conversation between Lord Shiva (Sambhu) and goddess Uma (his consort) is a bestower of great joy, happiness, bliss and beatitude, and at the same time it is able to destroy all sorts of sorrows and torments that haunt a creature. (1)

It is a destroyer of the bondage formed by the cycle of life and death.

It is a remover of all spiritual delusions, ignorance, doubts, confusions and consternations.

It grants joy, happiness and exhilaration to devotees, and it is exceedingly liked by saints and pious souls.¹ (2)

[Note—¹As we have already seen in the previous verses, these facts have been reiterated again and again. For instance, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 126 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

राम उपासक जे जग माहीं । एहि सम प्रिय तिन्ह केँ कछु नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
रघुपति कृपाँ जथामति गावा । मैं यह पावन चरित सुहावा ॥ ४ ॥

rāma upāsaka jē jaga māhīm. ēhi sama priya tinha kēm kachu nāhīm. 3.
raghupati kṛpām̐ jathāmati gāvā. maim̐ yaha pāvana carita suhāvā. 4.

For those who are devotees of Lord Ram, those who worship, adore and revere the Lord, there is nothing more dear to them than this story of the Lord¹. (3)

By the grace and munificence of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram), I (sage Yagyavalkya) have narrated this pleasant, wonderful, purifying, divine, holy, sacred and glorious story of Lord Ram that describes the Lord's mystical life and deeds during his sojourn in this world in a human form (pāvana carita suhāvā) according to my abilities and to the best of my knowledge and understanding (jathāmati)². (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 128.

²No one can claim to be absolute, perfect and comprehensive in his narration of Lord Ram's story. Every narrator tells the story according to his grasp and understanding—because this story is as vast and endless as the cosmos itself.

This fact that one describes the story of Lord Ram according to his own abilities and subject to his limitations is reiterated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund when he had completed his own narration for Garud. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 123-a.

What more to say—even the omniscient, all-knowing, self-realised and enlightened God known as Lord Shiva, who was the first to have become aware of this story when he was meditating upon Lord Ram, had expressed the same limitation at the time of concluding narrating the story to goddess Parvati. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 128.

The great and blessed soul Goswami Tulsidas, the poet who was chosen by the Lord God to reveal this esoteric story of all of us during our present age, had also expressed his limitations while beginning to write this divine story of Lord Ram. This fact is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 43-a.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 14; Doha no. 29-c; Doha no. 30-b.]

एहिं कलिकाल न साधन दूजा । जोग जग्य जप तप ब्रत पूजा ॥ ५ ॥
 रामहि सुमिरिअ गाइअ रामहि । संतत सुनिअ राम गुन ग्रामहि ॥ ६ ॥

ēhiṁ kalikāla na sādhana dūjā. jōga jagya japa tapa brata pūjā. 5.
 rāmahi sumiri'a gā'i'a rāmahi. santata suni'a rāma guna grāmahi. 6.

{Thus far was the narration of sage Yagyavalkya. Now in these verses the poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas, who had quoted sage Yagyavalkya while writing the present version of the Lord's story known as Ram Charit Manas in the current age in which we live, concludes his own narration. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 47.}

[Tulsidas says—] 'In the present era known as Kaliyug, one does not have access to any other methods or tools such as Yoga (meditation), Yagya (doing fire and other sacrifices), Japa (repeating of mantras and prayers), Tapa (penance and austerity), Vrata (keeping religious vows) and Puja (worship) for attaining one's spiritual goals in life. (5)

The only way available to a creature is to always remember Lord Ram, speak about the Lord and praise his glories, and hear the excellent glories of the Lord from true saints. (6)¹

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103-a along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.]

जासु पतित पावन बड़ बाना । गावहिं कबि श्रुति संत पुराना ॥ ७ ॥
 ताहि भजहि मन तजि कुटिलाई । राम भजें गति केहिं नहिं पाई ॥ ८ ॥

jāsu patita pāvana baṛa bānā. gāvahiṁ kabi śruti santa purānā. 7.
 tāhi bhajahi mana taji kuṭilāī. rāma bhajāṁ gati kēhiṁ nahīṁ pāī. 8.

Great and exalted souls who are wise, sagacious and erudite affirm in an unequivocal and unanimous term that one must abandon all sorts of pretension and falsehood to sincerely worship, revere and have devotion for Lord Ram whose sacrosanct vow and solemn promise is to purify and liberate all those who are fallen and impure (without discrimination or bias)¹. (7)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without the least gainsay, say who has not found the ultimate liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation if he has worshipped Lord Ram, if he has had devotion for the Lord and has revered and adored him²! (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 43; (c) Sundar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 14; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 44; (c) Uttar Kand, (v) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 16.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 124; (ii) Doha no. 128; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 129.]

छं०. पाई न केहिं गति पतित पावन राम भजि सुनु सठ मना । १ ।
 गनिका अजामिल ब्याध गीध गजादि खल तारे घना ॥ २ ॥
 आभीर जमन किरात खस स्वपचादि अति अघरूप जे । ३ ।
 कहि नाम बारक तेपि पावन होहिं राम नमामि ते ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

pā'i na kēhiṁ gati patita pāvana rāma bhaji sunu saṭha manā. 1.
 ganikā ajāmila byādha gīdha gajādi khala tāre ghanā. 2.
 ābhīra jamana kirāta khasa svapacādi ati agharūpa jē. 3.
 kahi nāma bāraka tēpi pāvana hōhiṁ rāma namāmi tē. 4.

Oh my stupid Mana (mind-intellect and heart)! Think deeply (and decide for yourself: who has not found the ultimate destination of the soul (which is liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation; attaining oneness of the individual's soul with the universal Cosmic Soul that ends the cycle of birth and death for a creature) by worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram who is a purifier of the sinful and impure ones? (Chanda line no. 1)

There are indeed many instances of this: say for example are the cases of Ganika (the prostitute), Ajamil (the sinful Brahmin), Vyada (the hunter who later became the famous sage Valmiki), Giddha (the vulture named Jatau), Gaja (the king of the elephants)¹ and other such sinful and fallen souls who were all provided succour and freedom from their torments by the graceful and munificent Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 2)

Even the Abhirs (the hilly tribes that lived on the coast of the ocean and used to harass sea-farers who voyaged across the ocean on ships in ancient times), the Yavans (the cruel people who ate flesh and were uncultured and uncivilised), the Kirats (the forest dwelling tribes such as hunters, and they included the Nishads who were boatmen), the Khasas (another hill tribe who, unlike the the Abhirs, lived far away from the ocean), the Swapachs (also called the Chandals, who were out-castes and usually lived near cremation grounds)²—all of whom are deemed to be images of sinfulness, evil and perversion --- (Chanda line no. 3)

--- They too find succour and deliverance, they too become purified of their sins and evil ways by merely uttering the holy name of Lord Ram once. I bow my head most reverentially before such a Lord as Sri Ram! (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹⁻² Refer to: Ram Charit Manas,

(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26 (regarding Ajamil, Gaja and Ganika);

(ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 19, and Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 194 (regarding Valmiki);

(iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 194 (regarding the Swapacha, Khasas, Yamans, Kola and Kirats;

(iv) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 251 (regarding the Kols, the Kirats, the Bhils etc. who were forest dwelling tribes);

(v) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60 (regarding the Abhirs).

Now, we shall read briefly about the individuals used as examples here.

(a) The “Ganika”: There was a prostitute by the name of Pingla. One day she had decorated herself with flowers and ornaments and waited eagerly for her lover. When he did not turn up even till midnight, she was very contrite and it dawned upon her that if she had spent so much of her time in devotion and remembrance of the Lord, she would have found deliverance. Right onwards, she turned away from her profession and became an ardent devotee of the Lord. This led to her emancipation and salvation.

(b) “Ajamil” (pronounced as “Ajaamil”: He is also known as ‘Dwij Bandhu’ because he was a Brahmin by birth. But unfortunately he became enamoured with a prostitute and married her. Bad company made him turn into a hunter. One day a group of sages passed by the village. When they asked the villagers if there was a Brahmin’s house where they could spend the night, the villagers told them of Ajaamil. So these sages decided to spend the night there. When Ajaamil returned from his hunting trip with a catch of a bird and saw the sages, he felt very ashamed. He confided with them that he is a fallen man and that they should not eat in his house. The saints had a merciful heart and they thought amongst themselves that it is their moral obligation to show this man some way by which he can find liberation and deliverance.

They cooked their own meals with whatever they had. The next day, they summoned Ajaamil and told him, ‘Look, your wife is pregnant. She will soon deliver a son. Give that son the name ‘Narayan’ (one of the many names of Lord Vishnu). This would lead to your emancipation.’ And then the group of sages went on their journey.

When the son was born, Ajaamil named him as advised by them—he called the son ‘Narayan’. He was very fond of the son, and called out his name ‘Narayan, Narayan’ umpteen numbers of times during the course of the day. He was unwittingly taking the name of Lord Vishnu. This continued till the time came for his death. When he was tormented by the messengers of Yam, the God of hell and death, he became terrified and called out in fear—‘Narayan, Narayan. Save me’. Though he was calling his son, but the Lord heard his name being called out by someone in distress. So he sent his own messengers to protect the caller. The messengers of Lord chased away the messengers of Yam and took Ajaamil to heaven. When Yam complained to Vishnu, the Lord told him that if anyone calls out his name at the time of death he is duty-bound to liberate and protect him. This story tells us the power of the name of the Lord.

This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat, 6/1-2.

(c) The “Vyadha”: This hunter is different from Valmiki. At the conclusion of his stay on this earth and complete elimination of the Yadu clan (due to mutual fighting),

Sri Krishna was sitting under a tree with one leg crossed over the other such that his soles were vertical. A hunter thought it was the face of a deer, and shot at it with an arrow. Coming near, he realised his error and lamented. Sri Krishna told him not to repent because that was his own wish. It is said that Bali (the monkey) was this hunter, and he had avenged Sri Ram's shooting him from a hiding during the fight between Sugriv and Bali. This incident has a moral lesson that our deeds and actions dog us even in our next birth. Sri Ram was no exception. Refer: Tulsidas' Vinai Patrika, verse no. 214, stanza no. 5.

The great sage Valmiki, who had written the epic book 'Ramayana' in Sanskrit language, is also known as 'Vyadha' because before he became a renowned sage he was a cruel hunter and robber, often times killing his victims if they failed to give him all they possessed. He is also credited with penning Advhut Ramayan in which Sita had assumed the form of Maha Kali to kill the Ravana with a thousand heads.

His story in brief is as follows: Valmiki is said to be the son of sage Pracheta who is said to be the son of Varun, the Water God. He is also said to be one of the Prajaapatis—the ancient patriarchs of this world.

According to Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 57-58 he was a Brahmin by birth but became a cruel robber who would even kill his victims if they failed to give all their possessions to him. He had adopted this means of livelihood because he was brought up by a band of robbers and highway vagabonds who would way lay travelers and rob them. Once the seven celestial sages known as the Sapta-Rishis went through the forest where he lived, and Valmiki accosted them. When asked by the sages why he robbed others, Valmiki replied that he did it to feed his family and other dependants. The sages advised him that they would not share the consequences of sins that he is committing for them. To test the correctness of this advice, Valmiki tied them to a tree and went to his house to ask his kith and kin if they would share any misfortune that might befall upon him. When they replied that they are only concerned with what loot he brings home, Valmiki's eyes of wisdom opened instantaneously. He rushed back to the sages, untied them and fell at their feet seeking forgiveness. He asked them to show him the path by which he can seek redemption and salvation for himself. The sages then advised him to do Japa (repetition) with Lord Ram's holy Name 'RAAM'. Valmiki said that he was so sinful that it is not possible for him to utter the Lord's holy Name. At this, the sages thought over the matter and told him to repeat the name in the reverse order—as 'MARAA'. When this word MARAA is repeated it becomes RAAM. This trick worked fine for Valmiki, and he immediately sat down to do Tapa (severe form of penance) and meditated on the name of the Lord in the reverse order. He became so immobile and lost in contemplation that a mound of anthill formed around his body. It so happened that when the sages returned to the same place during their return journey, they saw him in this condition. They poured consecrated water on him and revived him. It was then that they gave him a new name 'Valmiki', which means 'one who has emerged from an anthill'. This story is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, 6/57-58.

He established a hermitage on the banks of river Tamsa and lived there. Lord Ram went to meet him during his outward journey to the forest, and it was in the sage's hermitage that Sita lived and her two sons Lav and Kush were born when she was sent to exile by Ram during the final days of the Lord's days on earth as a prelude to his winding up his worldly 'Leela' or deeds and ascending to the heaven as Lord Vishnu.

One day Valmiki saw a hunter shoot down a male bird and heard the wailings of his companion, the female bird. He cursed the hunter in a verse that came out of his mouth in a poetic style called the Anushtup Chand (metre). Never before had Valmiki ever composed any verse, so he was astonished at this development. Then Brahma the creator appeared before him and ordered him to compose the epic Ramayan for which the basic story was provided to him by sage Narad.

The genesis of the story of Ramayan is this—Once the celestial sage Narad came to his hermitage (called an Ashram) on the behest of Brahma. Valmiki asked him if there was anyone living in this creation who embodied all the 16 Kalaas (qualities) that the Supreme Being is known to possess. Then Narad told him about Lord Ram. This is how the grand and magnificent story of the Ramayan was revealed.

(d) The “Giddha”: Jatau was a vulture by birth, but a great devotee of Lord Ram. When Ravana was rushing towards Lanka on his chariot with Sita as captive, it was Jatau who had fought fiercely with him in an attempt to rescue Sita from the demon’s clutches. But ultimately Ravana had cut off his wings, and so the unfortunate Jatau fell down on the ground, mortally wounded. He kept repeating the holy Name of Lord Ram and managed to hold on to his life till the time the Lord came there in his search of Sita. Jatau told the Lord about Ravana stealing Sita and proceeding towards Lanka in the south direction. Then Jatau left his mortal coil while Lord Ram held him in his arms, caressing him and wiping his wounds with his own hands and using the plaits of his long hairs. When Jatau died, the Lord did his last rites himself—a privilege that no one else except one other character, i.e. Sabari, had got in the whole story of the Ramayana. Even Dasrath, who was the worldly father of the Lord, was denied this honour when he died at Ayodhya after the Lord was sent to exile in the forest because at that time only Bharat and Shatrughan were present in the city, and so his last rites were performed by Bharat. This episode is narrated in all the versions of the Ramayana, e.g. in the Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, in its Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29 right upto Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

It ought to be noted here that prior to this, Lord Ram has met Jatau earlier in the forest and befriended him. Jatau was a friend of Dasrath, and he had assured the Lord that he will stay in close proximity with them (Ram, Sita and Laxman) in the forest to keep a vigilant eye and give them protection to the best of his might—this is narrated in the Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-7. This fact is also endorsed by Tulsidas in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 12, stanza no. 2.

The glorious way that Jatau died has been lauded and applauded by Tulsidas in Dohawali verse nos. 222-227. Refer also to Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 12-16.

“Lord Ram lifted Jatau onto his lap and washed his wounds with the tears streaming from his (Ram’s) eyes”—this is said in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 13, stanza no. 1, while Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30 says that “the Lord moved his loving hand carrassingly on his head”.

Jatau’s special death which made him a subject of jealousy and envy for all other exalted persons as narrated in the Doha above has one unique aspect—in spite of him being a vulture by birth and body, he was given an honour befitting a father by none else than the Supreme Being (Lord Ram) himself when the Lord performed his last rites himself—refer: (i) Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 16, stanza no. 4; verse no. 14, stanza no. 1; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32; (iii)

Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 16, line no. 3; (iv) Doha no. 227 of Dohawali; (v) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 164, stanza no. 2; verse no. 138, stanza no. 3, line no. 1.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 138, stanza no. 3, line no. 1 says that Lord Ram offered a 'Pinda', a ball of cereals that is offered to the soul of one's departed parent, to Jatau after the bird left its physical body.

Doha no. 227 of Dohawali clearly says "Lord Sri Ram, who is an ocean of graciousness and mercy, performed the last rites of Jatau with a devotion and fervour which was ten times more than what he had for his own father Dasrath, and having done so, he, along with his brother Laxman, gravely mourned his (Jatau's) death."

The remarkable thing is that Lord Ram has called Jatau 'his father' in clear terms in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 15, stanza no. 1 when the Lord requests Jatau to live a little longer for some more days so that he (Ram) can enjoy his company as a father and becomes privileged to receive his blessings as a son gets from his father.

Dohawali's Doha no. 233 says—"Upon hearing the news of how Jatau, the king of vultures, had died, the great ascetics, the Karmayogis (those who do their duties in a righteous manner), the devotees, the wise-men, the sages, the mystics, the hermits, the higher and lower borns, et al—in short, all living beings became jealous of him on the one hand, and praised him and applauded him for the auspicious death he got."

When people came to know how Jatau had died while being caressed by Lord Ram as he lay cradled in the Lord's arms, and how the Lord had himself performed his last rites, they all praised Jatau and wished that they too could die the same way. They all became convinced that of all the living beings on earth, no one was as fortunate and lucky as Jatau—because all those who have taken a birth must die, but it's rarer than the rarest occasion when the Supreme Being himself comes down walking upto a dying man to move his divine hands on his head, to cradle the dying man in his arms, and to do his last rites with his own hands. Their becoming 'jealous' is a figure of speech to emphasise how much they envied Jatau because envy is a sort of praise and honour. One becomes envious of another person only when the latter has something that is highly praiseworthy and valuable, and which the other person who is jealous does not have nor expects to have any time in the future.

Jealousy and envy is an indirect way of immense praise. One is not jealous of an evil character in a person, because such character is denounced by the society. One is jealous and envious of a person only if he possesses some noble virtue or skill or asset for which the world lauds him and applauds him.

Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 13, stanza no. 4 explicitly says that when Lord Ram asked Jatau that if he wished to live then the Lord can grant him a longer life, Jatau had replied—"Lord, well, tell me one thing—to be in the presence of the Supreme Lord at the time of death is most difficult even for great ascetics and sages to achieve, and this magnificent opportunity has come to me out of its own free will. Where will I get it again? I will not be cheated of this golden chance by bargaining it for a life that is nonetheless transient, mortal, false, deluding and decayable. Therefore, I do not wish to live any longer!"

Then again, in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 15, stanza no. 4, Jatau says—"Oh Lord, believe me. My death is so honourable and desirable that not even the four commendable noble fruits that the scriptures say one gets by living a life of full auspiciousness and righteousness (i.e. the rewards of Artha—worldly prosperity and well-being, Dharma—honour that comes with being rightful and righteous), Kaam—fulfilment of all desires, and Moksha—spiritual liberation and deliverance)

can ever compare with it. Tell me, is there any such other honourable and divine reward more desirable than the way I am dying?” Lord Ram was left speechless, for he had no answer to this question!

What other factor, besides the fact that Jatau died in the arms of the Supreme Being, made his death so desirable and laudable? He had died in a selfless manner serving the Lord in trying to protect Sita, Lord Ram’s honourable wife, from the clutches of the demon Ravana who had abducted her and was taking her away to his city of Lanka. ‘Selfless service’ is one of the greatest deeds for a person to do, and this single action of Jatau made him perfectly eligible for immediate deliverance upon death. In other words, if one dies doing selfless service, and offers his services to the Lord God while actually undertaking the exercise, then his emancipation and salvation is a surety. Such a creature is praised by all the saints and sages—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 84.

In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 27, Angad praised Jatau when he said—“There is no one more praiseworthy and honourable than Jatau in this world. He is most adorable because he had left his mortal body in the selfless service of Lord Ram, and had gone to the divine abode of Lord Hari (Vishnu) after death.”

Nothing is in-accessible or un-attainable for a creature who has the good of others in his heart, who thinks for the welfare of others, and who is not selfish—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 31.

Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 16, stanza no. 3 says that “the king of vultures assumed a divine form and went to heaven after bowing at the holy feet of Lord Ram and enshrining the Lord’s beautiful and holy image in his heart even as he heard his own glories and those of the Lord’s being sung all around in the world”.

Doha no. 224 of Dohawali says “So many have died till now; so many are dying at present; and so many will die in the future with the passage of time—but till today, and not ever in the future, will anyone get the privilege of dying the way Jatau had died. (224)”

(e) The “Gaja”: In the ancient country of Dravid (the present day South India), there was a kingdom called Pandyaraaj whose king was named Indradumna. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and used to offer regular worship to the Lord with great diligence. Once, sage Agastya passed that way with his retinue of disciples. The king was so engrossed in the worship of the Lord that he did not notice the sage and neither did he get up to welcome him or pay his obeisance to him. This annoyed the sage and he cursed—‘You are like a haughty and wild elephant who pays no heed to those standing in the front. Therefore, you deserve to become an elephant—so you would take a birth as an elephant.’ When the king died he became an elephant in a pleasant island in the middle of the Kshirsagar, the celestial ocean of milk.

He had a majestic body and was very strong in his herd. Once he was playing with his she-elephants and companions in a large and beautiful pond. In this pond lived an alligator/crocodile who was actually a Gandharva (a semi-god) named Huhu in his previous life and had become an alligator due to a curse of sage Deval. The alligator /crocodile caught hold of the leg of the elephant and started pulling him inside the deep lake. The Gaja himself and all his companions tried their best but failed to free him from the mouth of the alligator. A long tussle followed and the elephant became completely exhausted. When the situation became so bad that the Gaja, the elephant, was about to sink fully inside the water, he broke a lotus flower and offered it to Lord Vishnu as his last worship and offering before dying. The

merciful Lord rushed instantly astride his mount, called the Garud, to save him. Reaching the spot within a moment, the Lord pulled the Gaja out of the water with one hand, and with the other he opened the mouth of the alligator to yank the leg of the elephant free from its clutches. Then the Lord cut off the alligator's head with his circular weapon known as the Chakra.

Both the alligator/crocodile and the elephant found liberation—the alligator/crocodile reverted to his earlier form of a Gandharva, and Gaja the elephant assumed a divine form similar to that of the Lord and went to his abode in the heaven.

(f) The “Kirats”, the “Guhas”, the “Nishads”, the “Bhils” etc.—When Lord Ram lived in the forest, these tribals and forest dwelling people had served the Lord in many ways. The company of the Lord and service rendered to him had purified these souls for all times to come. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88—to Doha no. 89; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 251.]

रघुबंस भूषन चरित यह नर कहहिं सुनहिं जे गावहीं । ५ ।
 कलि मल मनोमल धोइ बिनु श्रम राम धाम सिधावहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 सत पंच चौपाई मनोहर जानि जो नर उर धरै । ७ ।
 दारुन अबिद्या पंच जनित बिकार श्रीरघुबर हरै ॥ ८ ॥

raghubansa bhūṣana carita yaha nara kahahim sunahim jē gāvahim. 5.
 kali mala manōmala dhō'i binu śrama rāma dhāma sidhāvahim. 6.
 sata pañca caupā'īm manōhara jāni jō nara ura dharai. 7.
 dārūna abidyā pañca janita bikāra śrīraghubara harai. 8.

Those people who narrate, hear and praise or sing to others this glorious story describing the life, the time and the mystical deeds done by Lord Ram who was like an ornament who adorned¹ the line of great kings descending from King Raghu of Ayodhya --- (Chanda line no. 5)

--- Such people are able to effortlessly wash-off or eliminate all the sins and their evil consequences that are prevalent in the present corrupt era of Kaliyug, as well as destroy all the spiritual taints and negativities that dominate their Mana (i.e. their mind-intellect, their subconscious, their heart and their inner-self) during this time, and as a reward are able to attain the divine abode of Lord Ram (i.e. go to heaven; find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death; attain oneness with the Supreme Being) without any hassles². (Chanda line no. 6)

What more can be said about the glories and mystical powers of this divine and holy story of the Lord other than saying that if one remembers even five or seven of its Chaupais (verses or stanzas) and reverentially enshrines them in his Mana (heart and mind), treating them as representative of the whole beautiful story, and being as sacred and delightful as the latter³, --- (Chanda line no. 7)

--- Then it is sure and certain that Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) would eliminate all sorts of grave horrors arising out of delusions and ignorance that afflict a mortal being whose body is made of the five elements⁴, thereby providing the living being with eternal beatitude. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹The phrase “to be like an ornament of the race of kings descending from Raghu” means that Lord Ram was the most exalted, outstanding, honoured, revered, glorious and famous King amongst all the descendants of King Raghu of Ayodhya.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 15 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede it; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128.

³By saying that if one commits to heart and memory even any ‘five or seven random Chaupais’ of the glorious story of Lord Ram then one would get the same spiritual benefit as one gets by hearing the entire story it is meant that each verse of this holy Book is important and all of them are equally rewarding. It also means that this Book caters to a wide range of likings and tastes of different types of people with varying mentalities and temperaments.

Since all the verses basically revolve around the life and time of Lord Ram, their focus is the Lord himself, and therefore by remembering any given set of these verses, which the devotee is free to choose according to his own preferences, his mind would be remembering the Lord at any given point of time during the day, albeit in a subtle and indirect form. But just like the case of a correct medicine proving effective in curing a disease irrespective of the way it is administered, the mere remembrance of the Supreme Being by remembering some of the things related to the Lord would be effective in granting the necessary spiritual reward to the devotee.

So everyone has been given a choice so that each individual can easily pick and choose that part of the story of Lord Ram that appeals to his heart and mind the most. This helps to keep him interested, inspired and motivated. Otherwise there are fair chances that he would feel bored after a certain point of time and think that listening to the whole story again and again is not only time consuming but also needless for him after he has heard it once and knows it fully; it would seem a futile exercise to him in this world of hectic humdrum life.

Let us take some instances to illustrate this concept. (a) If one is interested to find out how to find liberation and deliverance, he can choose from any of these sample verses: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 126 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 130 (where sage Kaagbhusund advises Garud on this theme).

(b) If Bhakti (devotion) is the theme that interest him, he can prefer to remember the following verses: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36 (where Lord Ram has described the nine types of Bhakti to Sabari); or (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 46 (where Lord Ram has described Bhakti to the citizens of Ayodhya).

(c) If one wishes to worship the cosmic form of the Lord as the Viraat Purush, then he would like to recall these verses: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 82 (where Lord Ram has shown this mysterious form to Kaagbhusund).

(d) If one’s liking is the atmosphere of festival and celebrations, he can remember these verses: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that

precedes Doha no. 194—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 196 (where Lord Ram's birth is being celebrated in Ayodhya); or (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265 (that describe the celebrations at the time when Lord Ram broke the Bow and married Sita); or (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Doha no. 4 (that describe celebrations in Ayodhya when Lord Ram returned home at the end of his fourteen-years of forest sojourn).

(e) If one is interested in knowing how to physically serve the Lord, he can recall how the forest dwellers had did so in these sample verses: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 88 (the way Guha served the Lord); (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 114—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 115 (the way ordinary village folk honoured Lord Ram); (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Doha no. 251 (the way the forest tribals such as the Kols, the Kriats, the Bhils etc served the Lord).

(f) If one's heart is moved by the bewitching sight of Lord Ram moving through the many villages and hamlets on his way the forest, he has ample choice too: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 109—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 124.

(g) If one is interested in offering prayers to the Lord, there are countless choices here too: for instance, there are many prayers offered by the different Gods as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chanda that precedes Doha no. 186 (where the Gods have prayed to Lord Vishnu); (ii) Baal Kand, Chanda that precedes Doha no. 192 (prayer when Lord Ram was born as a human child); (iii) Lanka Kand, Chanda that precedes Doha no. 111—to Doha no. 115 (when the war of Lanka ended and the Lord became victorious), (iv) and again in Uttar Kand, Chand that precedes Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 14 (where the Vedas and Lord Shiva have offered their obeisance to the Lord).

(h) If one wants to focus his mind singularly on serving Lord Ram even if it means sacrificing everything else, there are examples of Sita, Laxman and Bharat as illustrated in the following verses: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 68 (with regard to Sita); (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 73 (with regard to Laxman); and (iii) Sortha/Doha no. 176—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184 (with regard to Bharat).

The list is endless, and the basic idea to cite the above examples here is that the choices are unlimited for a devotee of Lord Ram for him to remember any given set of verses that appeals to his heart and mind.

⁴The 'five-fold' elements that constitute the body of all living beings are sky, air, fire, water and earth. They combine to create a gross body which becomes victim of delusions. The Jiva, the living being, forgets who he actually is—i.e. due to delusions he forgets that his 'true self' is not his physical gross body but his soul or Atma that is a sublime and subtle entity known as 'pure consciousness', and it is a microcosmic form of the Supreme Consciousness known as the Parmatma. Ignorance of this fact is the cause of all miseries and spiritual troubles of a Jiva. When Lord Ram becomes graceful on a person, this delusion and its attendant ignorance are removed, resulting in attainment of eternal joy and bliss of self-realisation. An enlightened and wisened person would then become dispassionate towards the false charms of the body and the

world around him, and instead would focus his attention in attaining oneness with the cosmic Atma. This translates into his attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Ignorance caused by delusions leads to the following errors of perception: (i) treating that which is unreal and untrue as being real and true; (ii) erroneously treating that which is perishable and mortal as being imperishable and immortal or eternal; (iii) hankering for things that seem to give pleasure in the short term but actually cause excessive miseries and pain in the long run; (iv) treating that which is actually impure as being pure; (v) to mistakenly acquire things that ought to have been otherwise discarded or abandoned.]

सुंदर सुजान कृपा निधान अनाथ पर कर प्रीति जो । ९ ।
 सो एक राम अकाम हित निर्बानप्रद सम आन को ॥ १० ॥
 जाकी कृपा लवलेस ते मतिमंद तुलसीदासहूँ । ११ ।
 पायो परम बिश्रामु राम समान प्रभु नाही कहूँ ॥ १२ ॥

sundara sujāna kṛpā nidhāna anātha para kara prīti jō. 9.
 sō ēka rāma akāma hita nirbānaprada sama āna kō. 10.
 jākī kṛpā lavalēsa tē matimanda tulasīdāsaḥūṁ. 11.
 pāyō parama biśrāmu rāma samāna prabhu nāhīm kahūṁ. 12.

The only Lord who is most charming and sweet, who is most erudite, sagacious, wise and intelligent, who is a treasury of mercy and compassion, who shows grace and munificence upon those who are helpless and hapless destitutes --- (Chanda line no. 9)

--- Is no one else but Lord Ram! Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, there is no other Lord who is as selfless as Lord Ram, who would do good to others without having any expectation (or even a 'thanks') in return, and who would selflessly and willingly provide final liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of a creature (if at all the creature prays to the Lord for this spiritual blessing). (Chanda line no. 10)

Verily indeed, even a most humble, dull-witted and incompetent person like Tulsidas, who was fortunate to be blessed by a tiny fraction of the Lord's enormous grace, kindness, mercy, benevolence and munificence --- (Chanda line no. 11)

---Found eternal bliss and peace for himself—surely then there is no Lord like Lord Ram anywhere in this creation¹! (Chanda line no. 12)

[Note—¹Tulsidas basically says that if Lord Ram is so merciful and gracious that he took excellent care of such a good-for-nothing person like him (Tulsidas), then it is sure that there is no better or large-hearted Lord than Lord Ram anywhere in this world. Everyone is selfish; all Lords or Masters favour those servants who are of any use to them. But no one bothers about those who serve no good, are dumb and stupid. It is only Lord Ram who takes special care of those who are unfortunate and who have no one else to care for them. The best part is that Lord Ram does not even expect a 'thanks' in return—so selfless and gracious he is!]

दो०. मो सम दीन न दीन हित तुम्ह समान रघुबीर ।

अस बिचारि रघुबंस मनि हरहु बिषम भव भीर ॥ १३० (क) ॥

dōhā.

mō sama dīna na dīna hita tumha samāna raghubīra.

asa bicāri raghubansa mani harahu biṣama bhava bhīra. 130 (a).

[Tulsidas says—] ‘Oh Lord Ram (Raghubir)! There is no one as miserable, humble and lowly as I am, and there is no one (in this world) except thee who is a greater and a better benefactor and well-wisher of such people.

Keeping this glorious virtue and grand reputation of thine in mind, oh gracious Lord Ram who is like a gem in the race of King Raghu (of Ayodhya), thou should free me from the great miseries and horrors and terror of transmigration in this mortal world, from which I feel sore affright. (Doha no. 130-a)

कामिहि नारि पिआरि जिमि लोभिहि प्रिय जिमि दाम ।

तिमि रघुनाथ निरंतर प्रिय लागहु मोहि राम ॥ १३० (ख) ॥

kāmihi nāri pi'āri jimi lōbhihi priya jimi dāma.

timi raghunātha nirantara priya lāgahu mōhi rāma. 130 (b).

Not only this, please also bless me oh Lord so that thou must be as constantly dear to me as a woman is to a lustful and passionate man, or wealth and riches are to a miserly and greedy man!¹ (Doha no. 130-b)

[¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 31

A similar idea is expressed in verse no. 269 of the Book of Prayers called ‘Vinai Patrika’ by Goswami Tulsidas. An English version of this wonderful Book has been published separately by this humble author.

It's a very interesting verse, so let's quote it here:

“rāma kabahum̐ priya lāgihau jaisē nīra mīnakō?

sukha jīvana jyōm̐ jīvakō, mani jyōm̐ phanikō hita,
jyōm̐ dhana lōbha-līnakō. 1.

jyōm̐ subhāya priya lagati nāgarī nāgara navīnakō.

tyōm̐ mērē mana lālasā kariyē karunākara!

pāvana prēma pīnakō. 2.

manasākō dātā kahaim̐ śruti prabhu pravīnakō.

tulasidāsa kō bhāvatō, bali jā'um̐ dayānidhi!

dījai dāna dīnakō. 3.

“Verse no. 269—Oh Lord Sri Ram! Will I ever have as much affection, love and endearment for you (a) as the fish has for the water (“kabahum̐ priya lāgihau jaisē nīra mīnakō”; the fish cannot survive detached from the water), (b) as the creature

loves a life of comfort and happiness (“sukha jīvana jyōm jīvakō”; the creature tries all dirty tricks to get comfort and happiness in life), (c) as the serpent loves the ‘Mani’ (“mani jyōm phanikō hita”; the Mani is a luminiscent sac formed by secretions from the glands on the hood of a special type of snake; if the sac is removed it is said that the snake dies), and (d) as a great greedy miser loves his wealth (“jyōm dhana lōbha-līnakō”; for a miser, everything else in the world is secondary as compared to his pennies) (1).

Or else, even as a young actor is naturally attracted towards a young, clever and beautiful actress (jyōm subhāya priya lagati nāgarī nāgara navīnakō), oh Lord who shows mercy and compassion (karunākara), please produce (or develop) in my mind and heart (i.e. my inner-self) an intense desire (tyōm mērē mana lālasā kariyē) for drinking the nectar symbolised by having exclusive love and devotion for you that is of the purest kind, that is intense, truthful, steady, abiding and eternal by its inherent nature (pāvana prēma pīnakō). {Oh Lord, let it be so that I love and have affection for no one else except you; let me be devoted to you and no one else.} (2).

The Vedas assert (kahaim śruti) that the Lord fulfills all the wishes and desires (that arise in the heart of his devotees and those who come to him seeking something—“manasākō dātā”), and that the Lord is very clever and proficient towards that end (prabhu pravīnakō). {To wit, the Lord understands one's needs and desires even without speaking or asking for them specifically. So the Lord fulfills them on his own by merely approaching the Lord and submitting one's self before the Lord.}

Oh an abode of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace (dayānidhi)! I earnestly beseech you, I sincerely plead before you (bali jā'um) to give as alms the things which Tulsidas wishes in his heart (tulasidāsa kō bhāvatō, dijai dāna dīnakō). {And, what does he want? For an answer, refer verse nos. 267, 268 among others. In brief, Tulsidas wants nothing else but to have everlasting love and devotion for Lord Ram and faith in the Lord's holy name.} (4).”]

श्लोक. यत्पूर्वं प्रभुणा कृतं सुकविना श्रीशङ्भुना दुर्गमं
श्रीमद्रामपदाब्जभक्तिमनिशं प्राप्यै तु रामायणम् ।
मत्वा तद्रघुनाथनामनिरतं स्वान्तस्तमःशान्तये
भाषाबद्धमिदं चकार तुलसीदासस्तथा मानसम् ॥ १ ॥

ślōka.

yatpūrvam prabhuṇā kṛtaṁ sukavinā śrīśambhunā durgamaṁ
śrīmadrāmapadābjabhaktimaniśaṁ prāptyai tu rāmāyaṇam.
matvā tadraghunāthanāmanirataṁ svāntastamaḥśāntayē
bhāṣābad'dhamidaṁ cakāra tulasīdāsastathā mānasam. 1.

The most sagacious and erudite Lord Shiva had first conceived and created this exceedingly mystical and esoteric story of Lord Ram that is known as the “Ramayan” for the exclusive purpose of developing steady devotion and affection for the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, that same divine, holy and sacred story has now been

rendered by Tulsidas into a language that is understood by the common man when he realised that this story is infused by or soaked in the spiritual powers of the Lord's holy name that provides liberation, deliverance, bliss and beatitude to a tormented creature's heart, because he (Tulsidas) also wanted to remove the darkness prevailing in his own inner-self and attain this exalted state of existence¹. (Shloka no. 1)

[¹ This is clearly mentioned by him in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Chaupai line nos. 7 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 12; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 31; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 34; (v) Chaupai line nos. 7-13 that precede Doha no. 35.]

पुण्यं पापहरं सदा शिवकरं विज्ञानभक्तिप्रदं
मायामोहमलापहं सुविमलं प्रेमाञ्जुपूरं शुभम् ।
श्रीमद्रामचरित्रमानसमिदं भक्त्यावगाहन्ति ये
ते संसारपतङ्गघोरकिरणैर्दहन्ति नो मानवाः ॥ २ ॥

puṇyaṁ pāpaharaṁ sadā śivakaraṁ vijñānabhaktipradaṁ
māyāmōhamalāpaham suvimalaṁ prēmāmbupūraṁ śubham.
śrīmadrāmacaritra mānasamidaṁ bhaktyāvagāhanti yē
tē sansārapataṅgaghōrakiraṇairdahyanti nō mānavāḥ. 2.

This glorious and blessed story of Lord Ram which is known by the name of “Ram Charit Manas” is an embodiment of auspiciousness, is able to destroy sins and their horrifying effects, is always a bestower of joy, happiness and welfare, grants spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and true knowledge as well as the grand virtues of devotion and affection for the Lord, is a destroyer of the darkness caused by Maya and Moha (delusions and falsehoods leading to infatuation with things that are not real), is the cleaner of impurities sticking to the inner-self of a living being, is filled with a nectar symbolising the purest form of love and devotion for the Supreme Lord.

It is indeed an embodiment of holiness, sacredness, divinity, purity and truth.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, those living beings who take a dip with full faith and devotion in this symbolic lake of spirituality and blessedness should be absolutely sure that they can't be scorched in the heat of the sun represented by the torments and horrors of this mortal world¹. (Shloka no. 2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32.]

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The Kaagbhusund Ramayan Or The Aadi Ramayan

(Based on 'Ram Charit Manas' of Goswami Tulsidas)

[Roman Transliteration of Text, English Exposition, Elaborate Notes]

APPENDIX—1

The Spiritual Importance/Significance of the Story of the Ramayan that is known as 'Ram Charit Manas'

In this Appendix we shall read about the spiritual importance and the significance of the story of the Book "Ram Charit Manas" by quoting a wide selection of verses from the beginning of this Book, in its first Canto or Chapter known as 'Baal Kand'.

We shall read the following verses from Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand:-

- (a) Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 15;
- (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32;
- (c) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 39.
- (d) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114.

- (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 15:-

जे एहि कथहि सनेह समेता । कहिहहिं सुनिहहिं समुझि सचेता ॥ १० ॥
होइहहिं राम चरन अनुरागी । कलि मल रहित सुमंगल भागी ॥ ११ ॥

jē ēhi kathahi sanēha samētā. kahihahim sunihahim samujhi sacētā. 10.
hō'ihahim rāma carana anurāgī. kali mala rahita sumaṅgala bhāgī. 11.

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, those who would narrate and listen to this divine, holy and auspicious story of Lord Ram carefully, with due affection and paying attention to its details, who would be alert enough to understand its sublime meaning and comprehend its subtle message (both metaphysical as well as spiritual)¹ (10),---

---Such persons would surely develop affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram; they would be freed from the many sins and faults inherent in Kaliyug, and would

become eligible to get the reward of auspiciousness and spiritual merit (that would come to them automatically)². * (11)

[Note—¹This verse tells us how to read and listen to the story of Ram Charit Manas.

²And this verse tells us what spiritual rewards would come to such people.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand: (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 15; (ii) Doha nos. 126; (iii) Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iii) Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 130—all of which literally reiterate the same spiritual idea.

*Verse no. 10-11 can be read in another way also as follows: “Those who hear this (glorious, divine, sacred and holy) story of Lord Ram attentively, and who narrate or recite it wisely and intelligently, with great affection, devotion, belief and faith (in their heart and mind) (10)—such persons would surely be able to free themselves from all the terrible sins and their attendant horrifying consequences that are a common feature in the evil era of Kaliyug, would be able to purge all impurities from their inner-self, and would be naturally spiritually blessed with the development of steady devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram (11).”]

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(b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 34:-

निज संदेह मोह भ्रम हरनी । करउँ कथा भव सरिता तरनी ॥ ४ ॥

nija sandēha mōha bhrama haranī. kara'um' kathā bhava saritā taranī. 4.

I shall do it also because this sacred and mystical story of the Lord would help me to get rid of my own doubts, delusions and bewilderments pertaining to existence in this gross mortal world (for this will give me abiding peace and unbound joy)².

This holy story of Lord Ram is like a sturdy boat that can take a creature across the vast river symbolized by this gross mortal existence². (4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas makes it amply clear that he is going to tell this divine story of Lord Ram in order to eliminate any remnants of darkness caused by worldly delusions that may still be present in his heart and mind. Apart from the fact that the narration of this holy story spiritually benefits the narrator himself, the feeling of satisfaction that he gets when he finds that the listener too is filled with spiritual joy and bliss are additional rewards for him. Both the listener and the narrator therefore benefit by this sacred story of Lord Ram. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30-b herein above.

In Uttar Kand we read that Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, too was overcome with confusions and delusions; it was only after hearing the story of Ram Charit Manas from the saintly crow Kaagbhusund that Garud finally found his peace.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 68; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 125.

Even goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, was not beyond the tentacles of delusions and doubts. It was to remove her perplexities and give her peace of mind that Lord Shiva had revealed the divine story of Lord Ram to her in the beginning. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Doha no. 113; (ii) Doha no. 119 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it; (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

The great sage Bharadwaj too had some secret doubts and confusions; he had explicitly accepted his mental perplexities which had robbed him of his peace of mind when he had requested sage Yagyavalkya to remove them by narrating to him the divine story of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 47.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 1; (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 124; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 125; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 130.

In order to cross a wide and turbulent river with swift currents, a good and strong boat is needed. Likewise, for the purpose of obtaining deliverance from the miseries and torments of this mundane gross world, the divine story of Lord Ram acts like a buoy and a barge as it helps the devotee to find steadiness in his life and live peacefully in this world, with the assurance that he will finally attain spiritual blessedness and bliss.]

बुध बिश्राम सकल जन रंजनि । रामकथा कलि कलुष बिभंजनि ॥ ५ ॥
रामकथा कलि पंग भरनी । पुनि बिबेक पावक कहूँ अरनी ॥ ६ ॥

budha biśrāma sakala jana ranjani. rāmakathā kali kaluṣa bibhanjani. 5.
rāmakathā kali pannaga bharanī. puni bibēka pāvaka kahum'aranī. 6.

The spiritual story of Lord Ram, known as the 'Ram Katha' (rāmakathā), gives peace and rest to those who are wise, sagacious and enlightened. It delights all those who hear it, making them happy and blissful. It neutralises the negative effects of all the spiritual taints associated with Kaliyug. (5)

For the serpent symbolising Kaliyug, this Ram Katha is like a peacock (which is an enemy of serpents as it eats them)¹.

For the purpose of kindling the fire of spiritualism and wisdom, it is like a piece of firewood known as 'Arani'². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, the divine story of Lord Ram is as beautiful as the peacock because on the one hand it is charming, sweet and pleasant to hear and delights the heart, and on the other hand it destroys all the fears and torments arising for a creature due to Kaliyug just like the beautiful peacock that can devour a poisonous snake.

²During fire sacrifices, two pieces of firewood are rubbed vigorously to create a spark that lights up the sacred fire in the sacrificial pit. So, when one hears, reflects and contemplates upon this divine story of Ram Charit Manas for sometime, spirituality and wisdom sprouts automatically in his heart and mind.]

रामकथा कलि कामद गाई । सुजन सजीवनि मूरि सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥
सोइ बसुधातल सुधा तरंगिनि । भय भंजनि भ्रम भेक भुअंगिनि ॥ ८ ॥

rāmakathā kali kāmada gāī. sujana sajīvani mūri suhāī. 7.
sō'i basudhātala sudhā taraṅgini. bhaya bhaṅjani bhrama bhēka bhu'aṅgini. 8.

Ram Katha (the story of Lord Ram) is like the symbolic all wish-fulfilling cow known as Kaamdhenū during the era of Kaliyug (i.e. in the present world, it fulfils all the wishes of devotees).

For those who are wise and good, it is like a magical root that provides whatever they want. [Just like a medicinal herb that can cure the gravest of diseases if selected and administered properly, the story of Lord Ram has mystical abilities that enable a seeker to attain success in all his endeavours, which means all his wishes are fulfilled and his dreams are realised.]¹ (7)

On this earth (i.e. in this mortal world), the divine story of Lord Ram is like a sacred river of nectar that can provide liberation and deliverance from the fear of birth and death (i.e. it can provide salvation and emancipation to the soul of all those who hear it and narrate it with due devotion and faith).

Not only this, it removes all spiritual fears and consternations arising out of delusions and doubts that torment a creature, and for this purpose it acts just like a serpent that can easily devour a frog². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, a wise and enlightened person would not want worldly things; he would want spiritual blessedness, an eternal source of happiness, joy and peace, something that frees him from the miseries of life in this world and gives him liberation from the cycle of birth and death by providing deliverance to his soul. All these can be accomplished by hearing and narrating Ram Katha.]

²To wit, just like a serpent that devours a frog, the Lord's story can eliminate all the spiritual problems such as confusions and doubts (**bhrama**) that torment a living being. In this verse, the different spiritual consternations, confusions and doubts that create so much misery for a creature are likened to a 'frog', while the Lord's divine story that can eliminate all such problems is likened to a 'serpent' that can devour the frog.

The story of Ram Charit Manas, if listened to carefully and understood properly, would instill confidence in the heart of a devotee that inspite of all the problems he has to face in this world and uncertainties about his spiritual fate, Lord Ram would take care of him and his destiny, provided he submits himself unconditionally before the Lord and seeks his protection. When that happens, the Lord would certainly and surely look after his welfare, in the physical world as well as in the spiritual sphere. The very hearing and singing of Ram Charit Manas would provide unbound bliss and eternal joy to a devotee, and very soon he would discover

to his delight that his mind and heart has finally found the peace for which he had yearned for so long but which had evaded him till now.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 69; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1 that precede Doha no. 129—to Doha no. 130.]

असुर सेन सम नरक निकंदिनि । साधु बिबुध कुल हित गिरिनंदिनि ॥ ९ ॥
संत समाज पयोधि रमा सी । बिस्व भार भर अचल छमा सी ॥ १० ॥

asura sēna sama naraka nikandini. sādhu bibudha kula hita girinandini. 9.
santa samāja payōdhi ramā sī. bisva bhāra bhara acala chamā sī. 10.

Just like ‘Girinandini’¹, it (the Ram Charit Manas; the story of Lord Ram) helps a pious soul by destroying for him the fear of the gravest of hells symbolising a huge army of demons which torments ordinary creatures.

Once again, just like this ‘Giridamini’ being favourable for the gods and their well-wisher, this story of Lord Ram is also beneficent to all the saints and pious souls by providing them solace and succour from their torments and miseries. (9)

For the ocean of clean and holy water symbolised by the community of saints and holy persons, it represents goddess Rama (Laxmi, the goddess of well-being and prosperity, who emerged from the celestial ocean of milk known as the Kshirsagar)².

Like the earth that supports all forms of life and provides all its needs, this glorious story of Lord Ram too helps support the soul and takes care of all the spiritual needs of a person³. (10)

[Note—¹The word “girinandini” has two important connotations: (i) it means ‘the Daughter of the King of the Mountains’, and hence refers to goddess Parvati who was the daughter of Giri, the ‘King of Mountains’ and the consort of Lord Shiva; and (ii) river Ganges which is also called the ‘Daughter of the Mountains’ as it has its origin in the higher reaches of the Himalayan mountain range.

Goddess Parvati is regarded as the ‘Mother Goddess’ and the ‘Shakti’ which refers to the dynamic force and the almighty powers of the Supreme Being. She had manifested herself in many forms on different occasions to destroy the demons who represented evil, dark and negative forces in creation that needed to be overcome and neutralised. One of her most famous forms is goddess Durga, and the other is Kali. Both these two forms are regarded as the patron deities of the battle-field, and are invoked for obtaining victory over one’s enemy, no matter how formidable the enemy might be.

River Ganges, on the other hand, is also regarded with great reverence as a holy river that can provide liberation and deliverance to the creature. It is regarded as the ‘river of gods’ as it is believed that it flows in heaven, and a stream of it had descended on earth to provide purity to mortal creatures.

This verse simply means that the story of Lord Ram, known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’, is as holy, sacred and divine as river Ganges; it is capable to provide liberation and deliverance to a creature like this holy river.

Similarly, like goddess Durga or Kali, this story of Lord Ram can eliminate all fears of hell like this goddess had destroyed the huge army of demons to provide safety and security to the gods in heaven and mortals on earth.

Now, let us read briefly about the interesting story associated with these two goddesses, Durga and Kali.

Goddess Durga is a combined form of the dynamic energy of the three Gods of the Trinity—i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder. An entire Puran, called the ‘Devibhagwat’, is dedicated to her. Another work known as ‘Devimahatamya’ is a brief rendering of Devibhagwat, and it appears in another Puran called Markandeya Puran. Each verse of this ‘Devimahatamya’ book is revered as a Mantra, a holy formula dedicated to the goddess and used to invoke her blessings.

Goddess Durga is also known as ‘Mahisaasur-mardini’, one who slayed the demon called Mahisaasur, the demon who was shaped like a fierce he-buffalo. In his symbolic form of a ‘he-buffalo’ this demon stood for ‘law-of-the-jungle’—a law that has no regulations, no codes of conduct, morality and ethics, but is based on entirely on ruthless and mindless use of crude force depending on the whims and fancies of the most strong amongst the creatures. This demon’s misdeeds were so horrendous that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva became very annoyed at him, and they pooled their energies and powers to create Durga. The dynamic powers of other gods also established themselves in her form and their weapons became her weapons, thereby empowering the goddess with stupendous powers and acquire invincible potentials. Thus empowered and authorized, she rode a fierce lion symbolizing valour, ferocity, invincibility, strength, agility and astounding powers, to challenge the demon and slay him in the battle that ensued.

Goddess Kali is also another form of Durga which was revealed from the body of Parvati, the primary form of the goddess known as ‘Shakti’ or the ‘Mother Goddess’. There are two versions regarding the story of the emergence of Kali.

One version says that when the cruelty of two demons Shumbha and Nishumbha reached a climax so much so that even the gods were not spared, they went to Parvati and requested her to save them. She manifested herself as goddess Kali, the black goddess of the battle-field, who eliminated these two demons along with their other equally ferocious companions known as Dhumralochana, Chanda, Munda and Raktabeej. Her black form is attributed to her anger and wrath, as well as to the ferocity and heat of the battle.

The legendary story briefly says that Shumbha and Nishumbha were infatuated by the beauty of Kali, so they wanted to marry her. She laid out a condition that first they must defeat her in a battle. Infuriated, they tried to drag her away when she cut off their heads. Their other companions intervened, but excepting Raktabeej the other three were easily eliminated. Raktabeej had a boon that if his blood fell on the ground, as many new Raktabeejs would be formed as the number of drops of the blood. So the goddess Kali elongated her tongue to lick all the drops of blood of Raktabeej before they fell on the ground. This is how he was killed.

Another version is mentioned in Adbhut Ramayan said to have been written by sage Valmiki, according to which it was Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, who manifested herself as Kali to eliminate the demon known as Sahastrabahu, the one with a thousand arms. The story says that after successfully slaying the demon kind Ravana, the ten-headed king of Lanka, Lord Ram returned to his capital city of Ayodhya. Then he launched a campaign against this demon who is said to be a cousin and elder brother of Ravana of Lanka. In the battle that followed, Lord Ram fell

unconscious after being wounded. Then Sita jumped off the war chariot to assume the ferocious form of Kali to slay the demon.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27.

²To wit, just like the case of goddess Laxmi, who is the patron goddess of wealth, material well-being and prosperity with their accompanying comforts and pleasures, the divine story of Lord Ram grants all sorts of spiritual comfort, delight and contentedness to those who hear it or listen to it. It fulfils all their wishes just as Laxmi helps a man to fulfil all his desires by granting him abundant money, power and authority. Laxmi represented the best of the things that emerged from the churning of the celestial ocean of milk when it was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. Similarly, the story of Lord Ram is the best reward that one gets by keeping the company of saints and holy people which is compared to 'the ocean of milk' here because it is free from corruptions and is spiritually as rejuvenating as the nourishment given by pure and unadulterated milk.

³The earth sustains all its inhabitants, selflessly and without any bias. It sustains the animate as well as the inanimate, the high and mighty as well as the humble and the lowly. It provides nourishment and habitat to one and all, without any discrimination, and irrespective of who they are and what their religious beliefs are. Similarly, the divine story of Lord Ram selflessly provides spiritual solace and blessedness to one and all, it provides an opportunity for liberation and deliverance to all irrespective of who the person is and what his religious beliefs are.

Again, like Mother Earth, it is a treasury of everything that a person's soul needs for its welfare and happiness.

Once again, like the earth's diversity in its physical form and features as well the wide variety in the culture and tradition of its people, the story of Lord Ram too has many variations in its details and finer nuances, with different people interpreting and understanding it in different ways.]

जम गन मुहँ मसि जग जमुना सी । जीवन मुकुति हेतु जनु कासी ॥ ११ ॥

रामहि प्रिय पावनि तुलसी सी । तुलसिदास हित हियँ हुलसी सी ॥ १२ ॥

jama gana muham̐ masi jaga jamunā sī. jīvana mukuti hētu janu kāsī. 11.
rāmahi priya pāvani tulasī sī. tulasidāsa hita hiyam̐ hulasī sī. 12.

Like the sacred river Yamuna (whose water appears to be dark in colour as compared to river Ganges), the story of Lord Ram is able to darken the face of the messengers of the god of death known as Yam.

[To wit, it helps to put to shame the messengers of Yam who come to take the creature to hell when he dies. The reason is that one who hears the sacred story of Lord Ram cannot go to hell.]

Similarly, it is like the holy place known as Kashi for the purpose of granting liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death.

[It is believed that a person who dies in Kashi finds immediate freedom from the cycle of transmigration. There are two reasons for it: (i) The presence of river

Ganges on whose banks the last rites are conducted; and (ii) Lord Shiva who utters the holy name of Lord Ram in the ears of a dying person so that the latter gets immediate deliverance¹.] (11)

This story is as dear to Lord Ram as is the sacred plant known as Tulsi (Basil plant) is to him.

[Lord Ram is an incarnation or manifestation of Lord Vishnu. According to legends, the leaves of the Tulsi plant are very dear to Lord Vishnu so much so that no worship or offering to the Lord is complete without first offering these leaves to him.]

And as far as Tulsidas (the composer of the book 'Ram Charit Manas') is concerned, this story is as dear to him as is his own mother whose name was Hulsī, as it sincerely and lovingly cares for his welfare as his own mother would have done. (12)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19 regarding Lord Shiva giving the boon of deliverance to those who die at Kashi; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 212 where it is said that Ganges is the purifier of the world.]

सिवप्रिय मेकल सैल सुता सी । सकल सिद्धि सुख संपत्ति रासी ॥ १३ ॥
सदगुन सुरगन अंब अदिति सी । रघुबर भगति प्रेम परमिति सी ॥ १४ ॥

sivapriya mēkala saila sutā sī. sakala sid'dhi sukha sampati rāsī. 13.
sadaguna suragana amba aditi sī. raghubara bhagati prēma paramiti sī. 14.

Lord Shiva is fond of this story as much as he is fond of river Narmada (which is called “mēkala saila sutā” as it originates from the summit of a hill called Maikula which is part of the chain of hills called Amarkantaka). [The word “sutā” means a ‘daughter’; and “saila” means a hill or a mountain.]

It is a spring-board of all Siddhis (achievements; mystical powers) and a treasure-trove of all imaginable forms of happiness, joy and delight. (13)

For the purpose of inculcating and developing good and noble qualities, it is like Mother Aditi, the mother of gods, who not only produced the gods symbolising the best of qualities in this creation but also nourished them and favoured them.

[To wit, Lord Ram’s story helps a person to inculcate and develop excellent virtues in him; it helps him to become a noble soul with immaculate characters.]

It acts as a milestone in the path of devotion for Lord Ram; it represents the culmination of the spiritual efforts of a seeker to attain love and devotion for the Lord. (14)

दो०. रामकथा मंदाकिनी चित्रकूट चित चारु ।
तुलसी सुभग सनेह बन सिय रघुबीर बिहारु ॥ ३१ ॥
dōhā.

rāmakathā mandākinī citrakūṭa cita cāru.
tulasī subhaga sanēha bana siya raghubīra bihāru. 31.

Tulsidas says that in a metaphoric way this beautiful and holy story of Lord Ram is like the river Mandakini (a tributary of Ganges), a cheerful mind that is purified of all impurities and is tranquil and wise is like the holy place called Chitrakoot, devotion and affection for Lord Ram is like its verdant forest, and in it dwells Lord Ram with his consort Sita¹. (Doha no. 31)

[Note—¹Chitrakoot was a place endowed with extraordinary natural beauty where Lord Ram, accompanied by his consort Sita and brother Laxman, had spent the greater part of his fourteen years of forest sojourn. The Lord lived here in peace and comfort in the lap of nature and its pristine beauty. The charm of Chitrakoot and the Lord's stay there on the advice of sage Valmiki has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 142.

Refer also to verse nos. 23-24 of 'Vinai Patrika', the wonderful Book of Prayers written by Tulsidas. Its English version with elaborate commentary has been published by me, the author of this present book titled Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan.

The calm environs of Chitrakoot is compared to a tranquil mind to imply that only when the mind is free from disturbances can it focus on the thoughts of Lord Ram. These thoughts of the Lord are so absorbing and charming that they resemble the bewitching natural beauty of Chitrakoot which enchanted and captivated the mind of the beholder so much so that one never had enough of it.

Those who live in Chitrakoot take a bath in the river Mandakini whose waters are clean and unpolluted. Similarly, the story of Lord Ram also helps one to refresh his spirit, rejuvenate himself and clean all his impurities if he takes a dip in its symbolic nectar-like water by way of hearing it, reading it or reciting it.

In this Doha, Tulsidas says that the Mana (mind and the heart) of devotees is like the forest of Chitrakoot where Lord Ram had spent quite of bit of time living peacefully with Sita and Laxman near the banks of the tranquil river Mandakini whose water was clear as liquid crystal. This river flowed through the forest of Chitrakoot and made the environment around it pleasant and the land fertile just like the story of Lord Ram, known as Ram Charit Manas, that is continuously recited and heard by devotees of the Lord gives delight to them and purifies their inner-self, making their Mana a fertile ground where the tree of spiritualism can remain evergreen.]

चौ०. रामचरित चिंतामनि चारू । संत सुमति तिय सुभग सिंगारू ॥ १ ॥

जग मंगल गुनग्राम राम के । दानि मुकुति धन धरम धाम के ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāmacarita cintāmani cārū. santa sumati tiya subhaga singārū. 1.

jaga maṅgala gunagrāma rāma kē. dāni mukuti dhana dharama dhāma kē. 2.

The glorious story that describes the life and time of Lord Ram is symbolically like the wonderful gem called 'Chintamani' (which has the magical power to eliminate all worries—"Chintaa")¹.

If the refined mind and intellect of wise and enlightened sages and seers are likened to a beautiful and intelligent woman (for instance, a chaste and loyal housewife), then this story of Lord Ram is like her ornaments and decent attire that make her look adorable and worthy of respect². (1)

The hosts of glorious virtues possessed by Lord Ram and described in the story of the Lord are auspicious blessings for the entire world (for they do good to the world and all its inhabitants by acting as examples to be followed by one and all so that even a layman is offered a guidance to help him reach his spiritual goal very easily, comfortably, and in a sure way).

Not only this, the story of Lord Ram incorporating the Lord's majestic qualities also bestows 'Mukti' (liberation and deliverance), 'Dhan' (wealth and prosperity; especially spiritual wealth in the form of wisdom, bliss, contentedness and blessedness), 'Dharma' (inspiration to follow the path of righteousness, probity and propriety), and 'Dhaam' (the final destination of the soul which is to attain emancipation and salvation; the attainment of oneness of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul)³. (2)

[Note—¹The eclectic and magical qualities of the wonderful gem known as 'Chintamani' have been described by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund to Garud in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-9 that precede Doha no. 120.

To wit, if one hears and recites this mystically empowered story then all his worries are removed. He becomes carefree because Lord Ram is obliged to take care of his devotees.

²To wit, just like a housewife looks glorious and attractive in her beautiful ornaments and colourful attire, the mind and intellect that is devoted to this wonderfully glorious story of Lord Ram, finds joy in hearing it and reciting it to others, too is praiseworthy; such a mind and intellect indeed deserve respect and honour.

³Again, when one reads this story one becomes aware of what noble qualities in the world are, and then he can use them as benchmarks in his own life. A person desirous of reaching a high goal in life will find the story of Lord Ram as a practical manual to which he can refer for the purpose of guidance and advice. This fact is endorsed in clear terms in the next verse no. 3 herein below.]

सदगुर ग्यान बिराग जोग के । बिबुध बैद भव भीम रोग के ॥ ३ ॥

जननि जनक सिय राम प्रेम के । बीज सकल ब्रत धरम नेम के ॥ ४ ॥

sadagura gyāna birāga jōga kē. bibudha baida bhava bhīma rōga kē. 3.

janani janaka siya rāma prēma kē. bīja sakala brata dharama nēma kē. 4.

For the purpose attaining 'Gyan' (acquiring true spiritual awareness and knowledge; enlightenment and wisdom; gnosis), 'Vairagya' (the virtue of renunciation, dispassion and detachment from this world and the attraction of its sense objects of pleasure and comfort), and 'Yoga' (meditation, with its many branches and connotations)—this wonderful story of Lord Ram acts as a true and wise Guru (teacher and guide)¹.

For the purpose of curing the serious disease, symbolised by the horrors and torments caused by this gross world of transmigration, that afflict all living beings, this holy story of the Lord acts as the heavenly physician (known as Ashwini Kumar, the medicine-man of the gods)². (3)

For the purpose of inspiring love and affection for Lord Sita-Ram in the heart of a devotee, this story of the Lord acts as a parent³.

It is indeed like a metaphoric seed from which sprouts all kinds of religious vows, practices and observances⁴. (4)

[Note—¹If read carefully and analytically, the story of Lord Ram guides a spiritual aspirant as to what the practical meaning of the virtues of Gyan, Vairagya and Yoga is. The Book is a rich source material to enlighten a true seeker who wants to know what actually constitutes true wisdom, renunciation and meditation, and how to actually implement them in practical life.

²The celestial physician known as Ashwini Kumar is a patron deity of all doctors who use traditional medicines such as herbs to cure the greatest of illnesses. Hence, this story of Lord Ram is metaphorically an expert doctor who can treat his patient, the suffering creature, of all his ailments, no matter how grave they are. These ailments are not of the gross body which any other doctor can treat, but they are deep-seated spiritual problems that need some special treatment that only a specially qualified ‘doctor’ can treat. And this ‘doctor’ is symbolised by the glorious story of Lord Ram as it is able to remove all the horrors and torments associated with the cycle of birth and death by providing spiritual peace, happiness, bliss and blessedness to a creature.

It ought to be noted here that more often than not emotional problems—i.e. spiritual problems—are usually at the root of many intractable diseases which are hard for ordinary physicians to cure by the use of routine medicines.

³A parent is a child’s best friend and teacher; a parent would always teach what is best for the child. Likewise, the story of Lord Ram helps a person to develop devotion, love and faith for the Lord.

⁴To wit, even as a plant sprouts from its seed, the story of Lord Ram motivates a person to keep auspicious vows, follow good practices, and observe noble codes of conduct and thought. The story of Lord Ram is a ‘seed’ because all these glorious virtues—and countless others—spring forth from its content. A careful, wise and intelligent reader would find the story of Lord Ram a treasure trove of wonderful gems of wisdom and practical advice from which he can learn everything worth learning in life. From this ‘seed’ germinates wisdom and good advice that would help him in dealing with problems and dilemmas that arise during the course of his routine life. The glorious examples that sprout from this ‘seed’ hand-holds him in each step of his life so that he can find peace and happiness in life, lead a fruitful life, and reach his desired spiritual destination with ease.]

समन पाप संताप सोक के । प्रिय पालक परलोक लोक के ॥ ५ ॥

सचिव सुभट भूपति बिचार के । कुंभज लोभ उदधि अपार के ॥ ६ ॥

samana pāpa santāpa sōka kē. priya pālaka paralōka lōka kē. 5.
saciva subhaṭa bhūpati bicāra kē. kumbhaja lōbha udadhi apāra kē. 6.

The sacred and holy story of Lord Ram is able to vanquish and destroy all sins, torments and sorrows in this world.

It is a benevolent provider of spiritual sustenance to a creature in this world, and takes care of his providence as well.

[To wit, the story of Lord Ram provides joy to a creature while he lives in this world, and quietly ensures that he gets liberation and deliverance at the time of his death so that he does not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death, thereby freeing him from the horrors incumbent in this cycle.] (5)

For the King symbolised by a person's thoughts and motivations, this story acts like a wise and intelligent chief Minister.

[Just like a wise and intelligent chief minister of king can guide him to attain great glory and fame, the story of Lord Ram too can help a person attain the pinnacle of fame and glory in his life.]

For the purpose of drying up the vast ocean symbolising greed and longing for material gains, this story of Lord Ram acts like sage Agastya (who had drunk the entire ocean in three gulps)¹.

[To wit, just like sage could very easily gulp down the whole of the vast ocean, the eclectic story of Lord Ram can motivate a person to overcome all his greed for worldly things—which means 'all his desires are dried up'.] (6)

[Note—¹The story of sage Agastya drinking the mighty ocean is narrated in (i) Srishthi Khand of Padma Puran; (ii) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (iii) Mahabharat, Van-Parva, Cantos 103-105; and (iv) Anand Ramayan, Vilaas Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 18-24.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

There are three versions of this story. In brief, they are as follows:

(a) Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

(b) Sage Agastya once took pity on a bird whose eggs were washed away by the ocean. The grieving bird was trying to dry the water of the ocean by picking drops of it in its beak. Then the sage decided to punish the ocean by drinking it up.

(c) The third version says that the ocean had washed away the items of worship that sage Agastya had arranged for his routine religious rituals. Agastya became peeved and drank up the ocean. When the gods prayed to him to forgive the ocean, the kind sage obliged and refilled it in the form of his urine. That is the reason why the ocean is bitter and salty like urine.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the Anand Ramayan (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

In all these versions, one thing is found common, and it is that the sage had invoked the divine powers of Lord Ram to accomplish this unique feat. He had pronounced the Mantra (spiritual formula to invoke the cosmic powers of a chosen deity) of Lord Ram, which is "Raamaaye Raamchandraaye Raambhadraaye".]

काम कोह कलिमल करिगन के । केहरि सावक जन मन बन के ॥ ७ ॥
अतिथि पूज्य प्रियतम पुरारि के । कामद घन दारिद दवारि के ॥ ८ ॥

kāma kōha kalimala karigana kē. kēhari sāvaka jana mana bana kē. 7.
atithi pūjya priyatama purāri kē. kāmada ghana dārida davāri kē. 8.

In order to eliminate the wild elephants symbolised by such negative traits as 'Kaam' (desire, lust and passion), 'Krodha' (anger) and the countless 'Mals of Kaliyug' (the taints of sins, negative qualities, perversions and vices which are so dominant in the era of Kaliyug) that roam wildly and without any restraint or inhibition in the forest-like Mana (mind and heart) of devotees, the Lord's story acts like a group of young lions who can easily vanquish these rogue elephants¹. (7)

The sacred and holy story of Lord Ram is most dear to Lord Shiva (known as "purāri"), and is like an honoured and welcome guest of the Lord².

For the purpose of dousing the symbolic fire of wants and dearth that is as ferocious as a wild forest-fire that destroys vast tracts of land, this story is like the rain-giving cloud that pours its nectar-like water to quench all thirst (i.e. it satisfies all desires of the devotee and gives him contentedness)³. (8)

[Note—¹The lion is the lord and king of the jungle. It can easily overcome the might of the elephant that is far bigger in form and apparently stronger in body than the lion. Even rogue elephants are vanquished by the dexterity of the lion. Likewise, the story of Lord Ram has such mystical powers that it can easily vanquish such negative traits as Kaam, Krodha and other such taints that are formidable and almost invincible for a devotee to overcome on his own.

²Just as a person would happily welcome a guest of honour who happens to be his dearest friend as well, Lord Shiva eagerly looks forward to listening to and reciting

this glorious story of Lord Ram at the first opportunity. He enjoys it; he is fond of it; he loves it.

³Just like the case of the wild forest-fire that burns down huge forests, wants and desires that a person harbours in his heart robs him of all peace and happiness. His mind is occupied with the thought of these wants, and he never rests in peace. But the story of Lord Ram teaches him the joy of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, it tells him that this world and its material things never give abiding happiness and peace, and that the true goal of a human body is to find final rest for the soul by way of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation which is got when the individual soul merges and becomes one with the Supreme Soul.]

मंत्र महामनि बिषय ब्याल के । मेटत कठिन कुअंक भाल के ॥ ९ ॥

हरन मोह तम दिनकर कर से । सेवक सालि पाल जलधर से ॥ १० ॥

mantra mahāmani biṣaya byāla kē. mēṭata kaṭhina ku'aṅka bhāla kē. 9.
harana mōha tama dinakara kara sē. sēvaka sāli pāla jaladhara sē. 10.

For the purpose of overcoming the horrifying killer-effect of the poison of the snake symbolised by the sensual charms of this world, this story of the Lord acts as a great Mantra (formula) that is invoked to neutralise the harmful effects of snake-bite¹.

This story has the potential to erase the writing of providence that has determined a doomed fate for a devotee². (9)

For the purpose of removing the darkness symbolised by 'Moha' (delusions and ignorance that create infatuation and attachment), this story acts like the brilliant rays (light) of the sun³.

Similarly, for the purpose of sustaining the crop symbolised by the devotee himself, this story is like the rain-bearing cloud⁴. (10)

[Note—¹In the ancient traditional form of curing a person who has been bitten by a snake, the snake charmer uses certain incantations which are said to neutralise the poison. Hence this metaphor is used here to stress that the verses of this divine story are like the Mantras which help a devotee overcome his spiritual problems, no matter how grave and deep-rooted they may be.

²To wit, even if a devotee is destined to be doomed by providence, the divine story of Lord Ram can salvage his future miraculously, and give lift him up from the dark well of gloom and misery. This holy story of Lord Ram can re-write the fiat of Fate and the mandate of Destiny that had condemned the devotee to a life of misery and gloom by providing him redemption, filling his life with joy and happiness, and ensuring that his soul gets liberation and deliverance upon his death.

³Sunlight and darkness cannot co-exist. Similarly, the darkness in the heart of a devotee that is created by Moha cannot survive in the spiritual light provided by the story of Lord Ram.

⁴Just as the rain helps the crop to thrive and make the farmer joyous, the story of Lord Ram bestows joy and blessedness upon the devotee.]

अभिमत दानि देवतारु बर से । सेवत सुलभ सुखद हरि हर से ॥ ११ ॥

सुकबि सरद नभ मन उडगन से । रामभगत जन जीवन धन से ॥ १२ ॥

abhimata dāni dēvataru bara sē. sēvata sulabha sukhada hari hara sē. 11.
sukabi sarada nabha mana uḍagana sē. rāmabhagata jana jīvana dhana sē.
12.

For the purpose of fulfilling the wishes of a devotee, this story is like the all wish-fulfilling celestial Tree of Gods, known as the Kalpa Tree.

This story of Lord Ram is ever-obliging and ready to serve all the needs of the devotee just like the two benevolent, munificent and magnanimous Lords Hari and Har (Vishnu and Shiva respectively)¹. (11)

For the symbolic sky during the clean winter night that is adorned by twinkling stars that dot it like so many pieces of jewel, the heart and mind of those who are learned, enlightened and wise are also adorned by the story of Lord Ram that sparkles in their inner-self like the stars in the sky².

Indeed, without gainsay and in all sooth, this story of Lord Ram is like the cherished wealth of the devotees of the Lord, because they would never part with it, no matter what the sacrifice is that they have to make for it. (12)

[Note—¹These two Gods of the Trinity are very gracious, easy to please, benevolent and munificent by nature. They help their devotees like a parent would help his or her child. Likewise, the sacred story of Lord Ram acts as a best friend and companion who stands in good stead for the devotee. It grants all his wishes.

²Here, the Mana, the heart and mind combination of devotees is likened to the clean sky of the winter season, and the different episodes of the story of Lord Ram are likened to the twinkling stars that dot the sky. The night sky looks so beautiful with the decoration of stars. Likewise, the heart and mind of devotees derive joy by remembering the different episodes of the story of Lord Ram.]

सकल सुकृत फल भूरि भोग से । जग हित निरुपधि साधु लोग से ॥ १३ ॥

सेवक मन मानस मराल से । पावन गंग तरंग माल से ॥ १४ ॥

sakala sukṛta phala bhūri bhōga sē. jaga hita nirupadhi sādhu lōga sē. 13.
sēvaka mana mānasa marāla sē. pāvana gaṅga taraṅga māla sē. 14.

This story of Lord Ram is the culmination of all meritorious deeds and thoughts. It is the best fruit of all religious and spiritual endeavours.

For doing true and selfless good of the world and its inhabitants, this story of the Lord is equivalent to true and pious saints¹. (13)

For the Mana (the heart and the mind combined) of the devotee and follower of the Lord which is like the Mansarovar Lake, this story is like a majestic Swan that floats on its surface².

And for the purpose of cleaning and purification, this story is like the swift currents of the water of river Ganges (which is said to be a holy river that can clean the taints of sins and other negativities that cling to a creature who takes a bath in its water)³. (14)

[Note—¹Saints are always good to others; they always think good of others. Their actions and words are always meant for the welfare of others. They are selfless in their attitude and service. This is also true with the story of Lord Ram as it does the same.

²The ‘Mansarovar Lake’ is situated on Mt. Kailash, which is the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva. This lake is characterised by having crystal clean water on which float Swans. The ‘swan’ itself is regarded as a wise bird, and its white colour stands for purity and cleanliness. Here in this verse, the ‘Mana’ of the devotee is like a ‘lake’, and the story of Lord Ram that he always remembers and cherishes in this Mana is the symbolic Swan that floats in this lake.

³Just like the river Ganges that can easily purify the devotee who dips in its holy water, the sacred lake represented by the story of Lord Ram can also purify the soul of the devotee who reads and recites it.]

दो०. कुपथ कुतरक कुचालि कलि कपट दंभ पाषंड ।

दहन राम गुन ग्राम जिमि इंधन अनल प्रचंड ॥ ३२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

kupatha kutaraka kucāli kali kapaṭa dambha pāṣaṇḍa.

dahana rāma guna grāma jimi indhana anala pracaṇḍa. 32 (a).

The hosts of the glorious virtues of Lord Ram (that are described explicitly or implied implicitly in the story of the Lord known as Ram Charit Manas) can destroy the greatest hoard of negative qualities that are so prevalent in the era of Kaliyug, evil qualities that corrupt the soul of all living beings, such as evil and corrupt ways that demean the dignity of the soul and destroy the character of the individual creature (kupatha), fallacious and distorted way of reasoning that is aided by being adamant about one’s point of view inspite of it being erroneous and untrue (kutaraka), mischievous, evil and pervert practices (kucāli), conceit, deceit and falsehood (kapaṭa), pretensions, hypocrisy, arrogance and heresy (dambha pāṣaṇḍa) even as a fierce fire would reduce to ashes the greatest stock of firewood¹. (Doha no. 32-a)

[Note—¹In this Doha, the metaphor of the ‘fire burning or consuming the firewood’ has been used to stress how the various virtues of Lord Ram are extremely powerful and as potent as the blazing fire for the purpose of destroying the many evil forces that play havoc with the life and destiny of a creature during the era of Kaliyug. The person who hears and recites the story of Lord Ram would learn of these eclectic virtues in the course of his study of the story, and then realising the immense

importance of these virtues, how they make a person so great and how they can help one in his own life, if he is wise and intelligent he would endeavour to inculcate and practice at least some of these excellent virtues in his own life.

The reward would be that the numerous spiritual taints, blemishes and corruptions that darken his inner-self are scrubbed off one by one in due course of time, to render the 'self' immaculate and make it shine with the pristine glory of the supreme Consciousness.

To wit, the story of the Lord helps a man by acting as an example and showing him the practical way of being good and righteous in his life. It helps a man to become a good human being. It helps him to get rid of the layers after layers of evil tendencies and corrupt ways that had earlier suffocated his being, enabling him to breathe a fresh draught of air of spirituality and holiness which is the true character of his Atma or soul.]

रामचरित राकेस कर सरिस सुखद सब काहु ।

सज्जन कुमुद चकोर चित हित बिसेषि बड़ लाहु ॥ ३२ (ख) ॥

rāmacarita rākēsa kara sarisa sukhada saba kāhu.

sajjana kumuda cakōra cita hita bisēṣi baṛa lāhu. 32 (b).

The glorious and magnificent story of Lord Ram is like the rays of the full moon that shines with a soothing brilliance to shower the nectar of joy and bliss upon all living beings.

Even as the rays of the full moon are specially liked by the white flower known as the water-lily as well as the bird known as the Chakor (the Indian red-legged partridge)¹, the story of Lord Ram is especially loved by those who are pious, devout and holy by their inherent nature. This story is very beneficent to them even as it is very agreeable for the lily and the bird. (Doha no. 32-b)

[Note—¹The water-lily is so fond of the moonlight that it welcomes the sight of the moon by opening its petals. Similarly, the bird Chakor is so enamoured of the moon that it keeps its gaze fixed on the moon and follows its course through the sky from the time it rises in the east till the time it sets in the west.

This analogy is applied to saintly and pious people who are very fond of the story of Lord Ram as it gives them immense spiritual delight, bliss and peace.

By implication it means that those who are not saintly and pious would not like the story just like thieves who do not like the brilliant light of the moon because they prefer a dark night without the moon's light.]

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(c) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 39:-

रामचरितमानस एहि नामा । सुनत श्रवन पाइअ बिश्रामा ॥ ७ ॥
मन करि बिषय अनल बन जरई । होइ सुखी जौं एहिं सर परई ॥ ८ ॥

rāmacaritamānasa ēhi nāmā. sunata śravana pā'i'a biśrāmā. 7.
mana kari biṣaya anala bana jaraī. hō'i sukhī jauṁ ēhiṁ sara paraī. 8.

The name of this sacred, holy and divine story (of Lord Ram) is “Ram Charit Manas”¹. One’s ears find extreme solace and peace immediately upon hearing it. [Or, to put it in another way, “one finds immense solace and peace in his inner-self as soon as one’s ears hear this story being narrated”.] (7)

The elephant symbolised by one’s Mana (mind and heart; inner-self) is highly agitated as it is being scorched and greatly tormented by the heat of the fierce fire symbolising passions of the sense organs and temptations of their respective objects in this material gross world. This elephant can get rid of its sufferings and find peace and solace if it plunges in the cool and soothing lake filled with nectar represented by this divine story². (8)

[Note—¹The title of this story is “Ram Charit Manas”. It simply means ‘The story that narrates the life and time of Lord Ram and the deeds done by him, a story that sprouts spontaneously in the Mana or the heart and mind of the narrator, and is enshrined in the Mana of those who narrate it as well as those who listen to it’.

²To wit, if a creature wishes to find emotional peace and stability in a world full of turmoil, if he is tormented by sufferings and grief, then he is advised to listen to this holy story of Lord Ram as it would bestow upon his soul immense amount of bliss and peace.

If we apply this metaphor of the tormented elephant and the lake of cool water in which it plunges to calm its agitated nerves to the story of Ram Charit Manas, it would mean that if a person is feeling highly upset and emotionally agitated, one who feels that he is emotionally empty, spiritually in a void and unfulfilled inspite of having all the material comforts and pleasures of this material world, one who is tormented by the countless problems associated with life and has reached a stage where he is very eager to find an avenue which would lead him to a place that would grant him eternal peace and abiding happiness, then he should head straight to this path of listening to this holy story of Lord Ram being recited by a wise narrator as this would surely restore his peace of mind, give rest to his agitated heart, help him discover spiritual bliss and fulfillment, and fill his inner-self with extreme joy and happiness.

In all sooth and without gainsay, the story of Ram Charit Manas benefits the narrator and the listener alike. It is like a symbolic lake represented by a creature’s heart and mind, and it is filled with cool and soothing nectar that provides spiritual bliss and happiness to all those who make the effort to come and take a dip in it by listening to this story.]

रामचरितमानस मुनि भावन । बिरचेउ संभु सुहावन पावन ॥ ९ ॥

त्रिबिध दोष दुख दारिद दावन । कलि कुचालि कुलि कलुष नसावन ॥ १० ॥

rāmacaritamānasa muni bhāvana. biracē'u sambhu suhāvana pāvana. 9.
tribidha dōṣa dukha dārida dāvana. kali kucāli kuli kaluṣa nasāvana. 10.

Ram Charit Manas delights sages, seers and saintly souls; they are very fond of it. It is beautiful, holy and divine, and it was created or conceived (first) by Lord Shambhu (Shiva) himself¹. (9)

This story destroys or eliminates all the three types of faults, sorrows and poverty that torment a creature in this world². It helps one to defeat all the dirty tricks played by Kaliyug³, as well as neutralise the evil effects and tainting influences of sins, vices and misdemeanours. (10)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva is an embodiment of all the spiritual virtues that are deemed to be excellent, auspicious, holy, divine, immaculate and redeeming for the soul of a creature. To wit, Shiva is beautiful, holy and divine himself. So the story of Lord Ram that sprouted in the soil of Shiva's inner-self that has these eclectic qualities as outlined above also acquired these qualities much in the same way as a flower derives its nourishment from the soil in which it grows.

Thus, the story of Ram Charit Manas is absolutely holy, divine, auspicious and spiritually redeeming like Lord Shiva who had conceived it. It is like a beautiful lotus flower that blooms in a lake of crystal clear nectar.

²These refer to errors one makes in relation to one's deeds, thoughts and words. The sorrows that torment a creature relate to his birth, old age and death. And the other things from which a creature suffers in this world are lack of resources, poverty, and dearth of opportunities to rise and attain success in one's endeavours.

³The dirty tricks of Kaliyug cause immense delusions, temptations, passions, lust, desires, attachments, infatuations, ego, haughtiness, arrogance, anger, jealousy, ill-will, malice, hatred, enmity, and so on and so forth. These negative things set in motion a train of problems for a creature. All these seemingly insurmountable problems can be easily overcome by listening to the holy story of Lord Ram as it ignites the hidden spark of spiritualism in the creature that gives him the taste of bliss and beatitude that would motivate him to forgo other superficial forms of tastes represented by the artificial comforts and pleasures of this material world of sense objects.]

रचि महेस निज मानस राखा । पाइ सुसमउ सिवा सन भाषा ॥ ११ ॥

तातें रामचरितमानस बर । धरेउ नाम हियँ हेरि हरषि हर ॥ १२ ॥

raci mahēsa nija mānasa rākhā. pā'i susama'u sivā sana bhāṣā. 11.
tātēṁ rāmacaritamānasa bara. dharē'u nāma hiyaṁ hēri haraṣi hara. 12.

Lord Mahesh (the Great Ish or the Great Lord God) had created (conceived) it (the story of Lord Ram known as the Ramayan) and kept it enshrined in his Mana (mind and heart).

When the proper time came, he had narrated it to his consort ‘Siva’ (who is also known as goddess Uma or Parvati)¹. (11)

This is the reason why this story is called ‘Ram Charit Manas’—for it was conceived (or viewed; visualised) by Lord Har (Shiva) in his Mana². He loved and adored its beauty and spiritual value exceedingly, and so he reverentially, with due affection and devotion, enshrined it in his heart.

[That is why this Ram Charit Manas is the most revered and best form of the story of Lord Ram. It is because this story was conceived by Lord Shiva himself, then enshrined in the Lord’s sacred heart, and he was the first one to reveal it to goddess Parvati.

It is Lord Shiva who had given it the name of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ when he observed that the mystical deeds done by Lord Ram when he had manifested himself on earth as a human being for the good of his devotees (“Ram Charit”) was reflected in his (Shiva’s) own heart (“Manas”) while he was meditating upon the Lord and repeating his holy name during his spiritual practices.

This clearly establishes that it was Lord Shiva who had himself named this sacred, holy and divine story pertaining to Lord Ram as “Ram Charit Manas”] (12)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 105—to Doha no. 120.

²This story of the Ramayan is called “Ram Charit Manas” as it describes the life and times as well as the deeds done by Lord Ram, the Supreme Being who had manifested himself as a human being on earth for the welfare of the gods as well as other creatures, as it was conceived in the ‘Mana’, or the heart and mind, of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva always remains submerged in meditation and contemplation; he repeats the holy name of Lord Ram, viz. “RAM”, as his preferred Mantra (spiritual formula), and he treats Lord Ram as his revered deity to whom he offers all his worship and obeisance.

So during these meditative sessions this story revealed in his heart and mind, he was ecstatic with bliss and entered into a state of Samadhi, a transcendental state of the consciousness that appears to be like a state of trance to the outside world, and in which he lost awareness of everything else. He loved it so much that he carefully etched this story right inside his own heart and mind like one would consecrate a deity in a shrine.

Like one dips in a lake of cool and clean water to calm and sooth one’s self and would prefer to remain in the lake as long as possible, Lord Shiva was so excited with this revelation and its attendant bliss and beatitude that he too found exceptional solace in remaining perpetually submerged in remembering this divine and holy story and repeating it within himself.]

कहउँ कथा सोइ सुखद सुहाई । सादर सुनहु सुजन मन लाई ॥ १३ ॥

kaha'um^ॐ kathā sō'i sukhada suhā'ī. sādara sunahu sujana mana lā'ī. 13.

I (Tulsidas) shall tell the same story that is charming and pleasant, and gives joy and happiness (to both the narrator and the listener). All those who are good, virtuous and pious souls should hear it attentively (because it for their own good and welfare) (13)

दो०. जस मानस जेहि बिधि भयउ जग प्रचार जेहि हेतु ।
अब सोइ कहउँ प्रसंग सब सुमिरि उमा बृषकेतु ॥ ३५ ॥

dōhā.

jasa mānasa jēhi bidhi bhaya'u jaga pracāra jēhi hētu.
aba sō'i kaha'um^ॐ prasaṅga saba sumiri umā br̥ṣakētu. 35.

I shall now proceed to give a full account and describe what Ram Charit Manas is all about, what are its qualities, importance and values, how it came into existence, and how and for what reasons it spread in this world.

I shall now commence doing it after first invoking Lord Shiva who has a bull on his flag (“br̥ṣakētu”; the flag that has an emblem of a bull; Lord Shiva’s insignia), and his divine consort goddess Uma^१. (Doha no. 35)

[Note—¹It is absolutely essential and obligatory to pay respects to Lord Shiva and seek his blessings because he is the one who had first conceived this holy and divine story. Had it not been for him, we would have not heard of it, and so the world would have not been able to access this eternal lake of spiritual bliss and peace.

Another reason why Tulsidas pays his respects to Lord Shiva is given in Chaupai line no. 1 herein below.

Then again, it is equally important to pay my homage to goddess Uma because it was due to her enquiry and insistence that Lord Shiva revealed this story of Lord Ram for the first time, as hitherto he had kept it secret and enshrined in his own Mana.]

चौ०. संभु प्रसाद सुमति हियँ हुलसी । रामचरितमानस कबि तुलसी ॥ १ ॥
करइ मनोहर मति अनुहारी । सुजन सुचित सुनि लेहु सुधारी ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

sambhu prasāda sumati hiyaṁ^ॐ hulasī. rāmacaritamānasa kabi tulasī. 1.
kara'i manōhara mati anuhārī. sujana sucita suni lēhu sudhārī. 2.

It is due to the grace and blessings of Lord Shiva that this divine, holy and sacred story of Ram Charit Manas sprouted and developed in its full bloom in the heart of Tulsidas. This enabled him (Tulsidas) to become a narrator or recitor of this wonderful story. (1)

To the best of his (Tulsidas’) ability he would try to make it (i.e. narrate or recite or describe it) in the most beautiful way he can, but at the same time he requests one and

all who listen to it to improve upon it and make it more attractive and valuable as much as they can¹. (2)

[Note—¹And so true was his request and prediction. Today we find so many preachers and teachers and readers of this single book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ that one can’t keep count. Each of these teachers and preachers has presented it in his own unique way; each of them has interpreted the verses and their meanings in their own way; each reader understands and derives pleasure from this book in his or her own way.

Though there are many other versions of the Ramayan, this variety and flexibility is missing from all of them.]

सुमति भूमि थल हृदय अगाधू । बेद पुरान उदधि घन साधू ॥ ३ ॥
बरषहिं राम सुजस बर बारी । मधुर मनोहर मंगलकारी ॥ ४ ॥

sumati bhūmi thala hr̥daya agādhū. bēda purāna udadhi ghana sādhu. 3.
baraṣahim rāma sujasa bara bārī. madhura manōhara maṅgalakārī. 4.

The purified and uncorrupt mind and intellect is equivalent to the ‘earth’, the heart of a pious person is its ‘catchment area’, the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the ‘ocean’, and saintly people are the ‘rain-bearing clouds’¹. (3)

Even as the rain-bearing clouds shower their life-giving nectar in the form of rain, these saints preach the holy story of Lord Ram that describes the glorious of the Lord for the benefit of all living beings. This divine story acts as nectar for the soul of the hearer as it is very sweet to hear, is a rejuvenator of the spirit, and is a bestower of all sorts of welfare and auspiciousness for all the creatures. (4)

[Note—¹The clouds gather moisture from the ocean and then they move inland to pour it out in the form of rain which quenches the thirst of all living beings and irrigates the land mass of the earth. Similarly, saints and wise people study the scriptures and extract the essence in the form of the holy story of the Lord God which they then preach to others who derive joy and peace by it.

In this way, even those who cannot directly access the spiritual nectar contained in the scriptures are benefited by the saints who have access to these holy books.

Further, just as the inherently sour and un-potable water of the ocean becomes clean and pure when it reaches the cloud, because it is done by the physical process of evaporation which is the Nature’s way of distilling it, and when this cloud pours this water in the form of rain it becomes sweet and drinkable, the sagacious and erudite saints filter the vast contents of the scriptures by studying them thoroughly and then extracting their essence in the form of the divine story of the Lord God, i.e. Lord Ram, which they store in the reservoir of their heart and mind which acts as the ‘catchment area’, then they refine it further by applying their intellect and wisdom to transform the raw story into an exceptionally charming, sweet and pleasant narrative that would appeal to the heart and the mind of ordinary devotees with whom they share this spiritual nectar by way of reciting the story, preaching it, and explaining its finer meaning for their benefit.

Hence, just as the ordinary creature gets to access the life-giving sweet water from the vast natural reservoir of water known as the ocean by the grace of the cloud, the spiritual nectar buried in the huge volumes of the scriptures is made easily accessible for the devotees of the Lord by the grace of saints.

लीला सगुन जो कहहिं बखानी । सोइ स्वच्छता करइ मल हानी ॥ ५ ॥
प्रेम भगति जो बरनि न जाई । सोइ मधुरता सुसीतलताई ॥ ६ ॥

līlā saguna jō kahahim bakhānī. sō'i svacchatā kara'i mala hānī. 5.
prēma bhagati jō barani na jā'ī. sō'i madhuratā susītalatā'ī. 6.

The detailed narration and the explanation of the life and deeds of Lord Ram (the Lord God; the Supreme Being) during his human manifestation on earth is the 'cleanliness and purity' of the symbolic water (referred to in previous verse nos. 3-4 herein above; i.e. the divine story of Lord Ram and its spiritual benefits) that is made accessible to the devotee¹. This distilled and refined symbolic 'water' is able to wash all the spiritual impurities and blemishes that cling to the inner-self of the devotee (and by extension to all those who hear it with devotion and faith). (5)

The subtle and silent message of love, faith and devotion that is hidden in the story comes to the fore when it is explained by wise saints, and this is equivalent to the sweetness and rejuvenating qualities of this water². (6)

[Note—¹We have read in the previous verse nos. 3-4 that wise saints first refine the raw story and convert it into a sweet narrative that appeals to the heart, which they then preach to the devotee of the Lord. Thus, just like the rain water that falls on earth by the grace of the clouds to benefit one and all, is the purified and cleaned form of the raw water which was extracted from its primary source of the ocean which is sour and salty, the story that is narrated and explained by erudite and sagacious saints becomes easily understandable and it appeals to all. Even a person of ordinary intellect would be able to grasp its essence. Hence, even ordinary creatures can benefit from this narration.

Here, the process of explaining the meaning and message of the story of Lord Ram is like distilling water to make it sweet, refined, and free from all impurities.

²This verse explains the importance of 'explaining the story of Lord Ram'. This method makes it very charming, and simultaneously removes all doubts—which is like distilling water to make it clean and purified.]

सो जल सुकृत सालि हित होई । राम भगत जन जीवन सोई ॥ ७ ॥
मेधा महि गत सो जल पावन । सकिलि श्रवन मग चलेउ सुहावन ॥ ८ ॥
भरेउ सुमानस सुथल थिराना । सुखद सीत रुचि चारु चिराना ॥ ९ ॥

sō jala sukr̥ta sāli hita hō'ī. rāma bhagata jana jīvana sō'ī. 7.
mēdhā mahi gata sō jala pāvana. sakili śravana maga calē'u suhāvana. 8.

bharē'u sumānasa suthala thirānā. sukhada sīta ruci cāru cirānā. 9.

That cleaned and purified 'water' representing the detailed narration of the Lord's holy story and removal of all doubts is the symbolic rain water that is beneficial for the crop represented by the good deeds of a creature.

[Just as rain water is beneficial for the crop as it makes the latter grow properly and yield good result for the farmer, the story of Lord Ram, when it is properly explained by the teacher and understood by the disciple, too is beneficial for the spiritual welfare of the latter.]

Therefore, for a devotee of Lord Ram this story is like his own life and soul, and hence it is most dear to him. (7)

This purified symbolic water represented by the narration of the holy story of Lord Ram fell on the earth represented by the wise, attentive and receptive 'mind and intellect' of the hearer (i.e. the devotee who listens to it with faith and devotion); this water then moves through the pleasant channel of the 'ear' to reach the best reservoir meant for it; and this reservoir is symbolised by the 'heart' of the hearer where this holy water finally collects and dwells (to be accessed by the devotee as and when he needs it)¹. [And that is why the story of Lord Ram is called the "Ram Charit Manas" because the word 'Manas' refers to the 'Mana'—the combination of the heart and the mind.]

As time passed, this 'water' became cleaner, cooler and more refreshing as it is allowed to settle in its resting place in the heart (because whatever residual impurities that still remained in this water could settle down to the bottom when the water was allowed to remain undisturbed for some time in the receptacle, making that part of the water that is to be used much cleaner than what it was in the beginning)². (8-9)

[Note—¹Merely hearing the story won't benefit the listener if he is not attentive and his mind is not ready to receive the message just like a student who does not pay attention in the classroom is unable to grasp the subject being taught by the teacher. Such students waste their time in school, and they gain nothing by attending the class physically when their mind is focused elsewhere and they are not paying attention to the subject being taught.

Once again, a clever student is one who goes home and revises the subject taught in school; he keeps on revising it from time to time till he has a complete grasp of the subject. Later on in life when he grows up, this wise student would shine in his field of expertise as his knowledge has a robust foundation and he is well-versed in the fine technical details of the subject of his choice.

Therefore, it is very important to hear this story of Lord Ram with a receptive mind willing to learn its finer details and understand its message properly. Just as running by rote won't benefit the student at all because he won't be able to understand the intricacies of any technical subject, and therefore would fail to solve practical problems pertaining to this subject, the hearing of the story of Lord Ram in a careless manner won't serve any purpose for the hearer. If a spiritual aspirant wishes to really benefit from the story of Lord Ram then he must pay attention to its finer details, remove all doubts by questioning his teacher, and then keep on thinking of the story and its subtle message on a continuing basis.

²When water flows over some surface then it is natural for it to collect some dirt sticking to this surface irrespective of the fact that the water was cleaned earlier. When this water is allowed to remain undisturbed for some time, the dust particles settle at the bottom of the container and clean water comes on the surface.

Likewise, when the story of Lord Ram is first heard and stored in the heart and memory of the devotee, it may not be perfectly clear in its meaning and message to him. Later on as time passes and he gets the company of saints where this story is explained in detail in a variety of ways by different teachers using different ways to explain it, the subtle meaning and the hidden message of the story of the Lord becomes more and more clearer to the devotee. This is what is meant here in this verse.

The 'cleaner, cooler and more refreshing water' obviously refers to the greater clarity of the meaning and the better grasp of the spiritual message of the divine story of Lord Ram that the devotee has already enshrined in his heart.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 32.]

दो०. सुठि सुंदर संबाद बर बिरचे बुद्धि बिचारि ।

तेइ एहि पावन सुभग सर घाट मनोहर चारि ॥ ३६ ॥

dōhā.

suṭhi sundara sambāda bara biracē bud'dhi bicāri.

tē'i ēhi pāvana subhaga sara ghāṭa manōhara cāri. 36.

This most beautiful and attractive symbolic 'lake' ("manas") representing the divine story of Lord Ram has four banks represented by the four most excellent and wise conversations that have been recorded in it (and all these four conversations have been so expertly woven into the text of the story that they form an integral part of it, and cannot be separated from it).

[To wit, in this holy and divine Story of Lord Ram, (known as Ram Charit Manas), the four primary discourses, rich in spiritual and metaphysical wisdom, that have been narrated to form its framework, are like the four banks of a beautiful lake filled with ambrosia of bliss and beatitude. These four discourses are the following: Lord Shiva and Parvati; sages Yagyavalkya and Bharadwaj; the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garud; saint poet Tulsidas and other saints and sages that narrated this story subsequently.]¹ (Doha no. 36)

[Note—¹These four conversations are the following:-

(i) Between Lord Shiva and his consort goddess Parvati (also referred to as Uma, Girija and Bhavani at different places)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 108; and Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

(ii) Between sages Yagyavalkya and Bharadwaj—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Doha no. 47.

(iii) Between the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64.

(iv) The devotee poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas and his Guru—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31.

All those who had narrated the story of Lord Ram—i.e. Lord Shiva, sage Yagyavalkya, sage Kaagbhusund, and the Guru of Tulsidas—were wise, enlightened, erudite and sagacious. Hence, these conversations were intelligent, wise and full of spiritual wisdom.

A ‘lake’ usually has four banks—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 39 where it is said that Lord Ram went to a lake known as Pampa which had four banks on its four sides.

The story of Lord Ram is likened to a ‘lake’ because it is filled with the nectar of devotion (Bhakti) for the Lord as this story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ stimulates the development of the glorious spiritual virtues of devotion, faith and affection for the Lord in the heart of the devotee. It cleanses his inner-self of all spiritual impurities, and just like a fresh-water rejuvenates the body and the spirit of anyone who takes a dip in its pristine clean and cool water, the story of the Lord soothes the creature by eliminating the torments of his soul and providing his mind with solace and succour.]

चौ०. सप्त प्रबन्ध सुभग सोपाना । ग्यान नयन निरखत मन माना ॥ १ ॥

रघुपति महिमा अगुन अबाधा । बरनब सोइ बर बारि अगाधा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sapta prabandha subhaga sōpānā. gyāna nayana nirakhata mana mānā. 1.
raghupati mahimā aguna abādhā. baranaba sō'i bara bāri agādhā. 2.

The seven ‘Kandas’ (Cantos or Chapters) are the seven symbolic ‘steps’ of this lake¹, and one feels delighted in heart when one sees these steps with the eyes of wisdom².
(1)*

The fathomless depth of this reservoir of spiritual nectar is represented by the infinite glories and the eclectic virtues of Lord Raghunath (Lord Sri Ram) that are divine by nature, as well as beyond comprehension of the mind and grasp of the intellect³. (2)**

[Note—¹Just as one needs steps to reach the water in a vast lake, the nectar that provides spiritual bliss to the devotee in the story of Ram Charit Manas can be accessed in the right way only if one reads the whole story consisting of seven Kandas from the beginning to its natural conclusion. Random reading would be like skipping the steps and trying to jump directly into the lake to bathe in its water, and this would obviously cause serious injury to the bather.

²When one sees a deep fresh-water lake and wishes to take a dip in its cool and refreshing water, the first thing that he searches for are the steps that lead to that water. Some of the steps may be dirty and made slippery by the use of others who may not have bothered to clean them after use, so he looks around to find some place where the steps are not only clean but also lead to that part of the lake where the water is free from surface impurities such as algae, hyacinth and other aquatic plants, or even stagnant water on which some kind of scum may have collected over time.

In this metaphor, the devotee would get true benefit by reading or hearing this story of Lord Ram if he approaches it with the 'sight of wisdom'. To wit, he must be careful, alert and wise to be able to understand the hidden spiritual message of the story to gain anything from it, and not get entangled in the mesh of other superficial things relating to the humdrum affairs of the mortal world as described in it. One must realise that the story describes the life and time of the Supreme Being during his manifestation as a 'human being on earth which is a gross and mortal world'. Life on earth is not the same ideal life as one expects in the heaven.

It is quite natural and incumbent in this scenario that all the not-so-divine factors that are associated with and are a part-and-parcel of life on earth and existence in the mortal gross world are bound to cast some of their shadows on the story. It would therefore be foolhardy and stupid on the part of a seeker to get bogged down in this quagmire and be distracted from his real spiritual goal. This is what is meant by 'looking at the seven steps with eyes of wisdom'.

³One must not be misled by what one sees on the surface of the story, for its content of spiritual knowledge and wisdom is exceedingly deep and beyond measure. To wit, on the surface it appears to be one other story from ancient mythology, but on deep analysis one would see more to it than what meets the eye. The deeper one goes into the story, the greater is the treasure of wisdom that one discovers in it.

It is not a shallow lake; it is as deep as the ocean. Nay, it is deeper than the ocean; it is as fathomless as the sky and the space of the cosmos that is filled with ether.

Some of the instances where the stupendous glories and the divine nature of Lord Ram have been mentioned in Ram Charit Manas are as follows: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 341 (where king Janak has prized Lord Ram); (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (where Laxman has praised Lord Ram's greatness to Nishad); (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 127 (where sage Valmiki has praised the glory of Lord Ram); (iii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 13; (iv) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 1 (where Hanuman has praised the Lord); (v) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 21 (where Hanuman has praised Lord Ram's stupendous glory in the court of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka); (vi) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22 (where Angad, the messenger of Lord Ram, has praised the Lord while admonishing Ravana and advising him to surrender before the almighty Lord); and (vii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 82 (where the saintly crow Kaagbhusund describes the cosmic form of Lord Ram).]

<< We can read these two Chaupais and interpret them a little differently as follows:-

*This divine story of Lord Ram has been arranged into seven chapters (called the Kandas), and they represent the seven steps that lead to the nectar of spiritual bliss present in the center of the symbolic lake represented by this holy story. When one sees these steps and the lake that they lead to with eyes of wisdom, one's Mana (heart and mind) is filled with delight unbound#, --- (1)

**--- For he realizes that the water of this holy lake is accessed by reading the full story having seven chapters that narrate the infinite glories and greatness of Lord Ram, because they expound upon the divinity and holiness of the Lord in a finite and comprehensible way so as to make the Supreme Lord, whose primary form is invisible, cosmic, infinite and without any attributes, become easily accessible to a devotee in a way he can relate to in the gross, mortal world in which he lives. (2)

#Why are eyes of wisdom so important? The answer is given in the second Chaupai—because without wisdom and proper understanding one would look at this holy story as a mere tale of a great prince of Ayodhya, a tale that describes his life and time like so many other fascinating stories and captivating tales written by numerous court historians, minstrels and bards meant more to eulogise and lift to lofty heights the concerned princes and kings in order to please them rather than to present a truthful account of events.

However, the case of Ram Charit Manas is completely different, for it is the story of the Supreme Being who was gracious enough to assume the form of a human being in the person of Lord Ram to fulfill the wishes of his devotees as well as to give countless pious souls a chance to have simple way to know the Lord and identify themselves with him, to give them a visible form which they can easily worship and offer obeisance to, because having devotion for an entity that has no form and attributes, which is the case with the primary form of Lord Ram as the Supreme Being who has a cosmic presence that is invisible and without known attributes, is extremely difficult in practice.

By manifesting himself as Lord Ram, the Supreme Being has given countless ordinary devotees a chance to attain spiritual joy, bliss and beatitude, as well as find deliverance, emancipation and salvation which they would have missed if the only way to attain this eclectic state of exalted being was by acquiring metaphysical and theological knowledge based on spiritual philosophy, for the latter is too abstract and makes it difficult for the common man to benefit from. >>

राम सीय जस सलिल सुधासम । उपमा बीचि बिलास मनोरम ॥ ३ ॥
पुरइनि सघन चारु चौपाई । जुगुति मंजु मनि सीप सुहाई ॥ ४ ॥

rāma sīya jasa salila sudhāsama. upamā bīci bilāsa manōrama. 3.
pura'ini saghana cāru caupā'ī. juguti manju mani sīpa suhā'ī. 4.

In this metaphoric lake, the eclectic glories and the excellent virtues of Lord Ram and Sita (his consort) are its 'water'¹.

The innumerable instances of enchanting comparisons, similes and metaphors that have been used in this wonderful story are like the softly undulating wavelets of this charming lake that captivate and enthrall the mind². (3)

The Chaupais (verses that precede as well as follow each two-line couplet known as the Doha) are the thick maze of lotus plants with its stems³.

The various styles of poetry employed in composing this story are like the many oyster shells that yield so many beautiful pearls. (4)

[Note—¹If Lord Ram was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as ‘Brahm’, Sita is the human form of Laxmi, the goddess who is the consort of Lord Vishnu and a manifestation of the cosmic Shakti, the dynamic powers and energy of Brahm.

To wit, Ram and Sita are not an ordinary human couple; they are personified form of the cosmic almighty Lord and his dynamic powers called Shakti. This fact is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246.

²Some excellent examples of wonderful comparisons, similes and metaphors are found in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 40 when Lord Ram visited Lake Pampa; and in (b) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17 where we read about the time spent by Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman on the summit of Mt. Prabarshan.

³The word “Chaupai” means a ‘four-legged verse’. The traditional form of a Chaupai is like the standard ‘stanza’ of a poem that has four lines that recur as the basic metre of the poem. There are many variations to this basic structure, and as for our Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’, the term ‘Chaupai’ is applied to each line of the poem. It is to be noted that each of these lines has two parts, one to the left and one to the right, with a pause in the center. This pause is like a coma (,) in a standard sentence, whereas the end of a particular line is like a semi-colon (;) or a full stop (.), depending upon the flow of the idea that is being expressed. If one line is sufficient to complete the idea, the end is like a full stop, and if the idea is continued into the next line then the end of the line is like a semi-colon.]

छंद सोरठा सुंदर दोहा । सोइ बहुरंग कमल कुल सोहा ॥ ५ ॥

अरथ अनूप सुभाव सुभासा । सोइ पराग मकरंद सुभासा ॥ ६ ॥

chanda sōraṭhā sundara dōhā. sō'i bahuraṅga kamala kula sōhā. 5.
aratha anūpa subhāva subhāsā. sō'i parāga makaranda subāsā. 6.

The beautiful Chandas, the Sorthas and the Dohas¹ that adorn this poetic composition are like the countless lotus flowers of different hues of colour that embellish the lake (referred to in Doha no. 36 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it). (5)

The high spiritual quality of the meaning of this divine story of Lord Ram (i.e. the Ram Charit Manas), the exaltedness of the noble ideas expressed in it, and the lucid and enchanting language employed to compose it are like the nectar, the essence and the fragrance of these lotus flowers (that spreads all over the lake symbolised by the story itself). (6)

[Note—¹The “Chanda” is a style of poetry that usually consists verses having a standard stanza of four lines each as opposed to the ‘Chaupai’ which has stand-alone verses of single lines. The standard number of letters and syllables also differ in the two styles. The way they are recited also differs. Other than this, the superficial structure is the same in both these systems of composition—i.e. there is a pause in the center of the line.

The “Doha” and the “Sortha” are also alike in the sense that they consist of two-line verses. The basic difference between the two lies in the fact that whereas in the ‘Doha’ the last words of both the lines rhyme with each other, but it is not the case with the ‘Sortha’.

Another technical difference between the two, which is usually understood only by an expert in languages, is that whereas in the ‘Sortha’ the first and the third parts have eleven syllables each, and the second and the fourth parts have thirteen syllables each, the ‘Doha’ has just the opposite, i.e. its first and the third parts have thirteen syllables each, and the second and the fourth parts have eleven syllables each.

An example of this will be evident when we compare Doha no. 15 and Sortha no. 16 of Baal Kand.]

सुकृत पुंज मंजुल अलि माला । ग्यान बिराग बिचार मराला ॥ ७ ॥
धुनि अवरेब कबित गुन जाती । मीन मनोहर ते बहुभाँती ॥ ८ ॥

sukṛta puñja mañjula ali mālā. gyāna birāga bicāra marālā. 7.
dhuni avarēba kabita guna jāti. mīna manōhara tē bahubhāmtī. 8.

The devotees who have done a host of good and meritorious deeds are like the huge assembly of ‘black bees’ that are so naturally attracted to the lotus flower that they crowd around it, humming away merrily and hovering over the flower to find an opportunity to draw nectar from it¹.

{Alternately, this part of the verse can be read as follows: “The many glorious and meritorious deeds narrated in this story of Lord Ram are like the black bees that swarm on the surface of the lake, buzzing around merrily and hovering over the lotus flowers in order to drink their nectar.”²}

The eclectic virtues of Gyan (true knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment; gnosis), Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) and Vichaar (proper analysis, correct thought, and intelligent application of the mind to chose the right option) are like the wonderful ‘Swans’ that float on this lake. (7)

The many styles of poetic compositions, and their excellent qualities and sublime charm are like the many varieties of colourful fish, small and big, that inhabit this symbolic lake. (8)

[Note—¹There are countless insects but only the black bee is attracted to the lotus flower. Similarly, there are countless people who may read this story of Lord Ram just due to curiosity but they will find no interest in it. Only those who have done some good deed from the spiritual perspective will find the true value in this story. So such devotees flock to it like the black bee flocks to the lotus flower, and then they enjoy reading and reciting this story and deriving immense bliss and blessedness by doing so just like the bee that merrily hums over the lotus flower, alights on it and enjoys drinking its nectar.

²There are numerous examples of the righteous and noble way of living and thinking in this world that are cited in the story on different occasions. These are like the black bees that hover over the lake because they are attracted by the fragrance of the lotus flowers present in it. These bees hum and buzz around the surface of the lake full of

lotus flowers, alight softly over the flower, drink its nectar, and linger on in the vicinity. This creates a beautiful sight for the beholder.

अरथ धरम कामादिक चारी । कहब ग्यान बिग्यान बिचारी ॥ ९ ॥

नव रस जप तप जोग बिरागा । ते सब जलचर चारु तड़ागा ॥ १० ॥

aratha dharama kāmādika cārī. kahaba gyāna bigyāna bicārī. 9.
nava rasa japa tapa jōga birāgā. tē saba jalacara cāru tarāgā. 10.

The countless other beautiful aquatic creatures that live in this lake are represented by the following: (a) the four rewards that one can obtain for all human activities (and these are ‘Artha’, ‘Dharma’, ‘Kaam’ and ‘Moksha’)¹ as described in the story, (b) understanding of what constitutes true wisdom and enlightenment, and what is the true reward for all human endeavours as indicated in the story, and then speaking about them wisely², (c) the nine charms of any composition, whether poetry or prose that are found in the story³, and (d) the grand spiritual virtues of Japa (repetition of prayers and mantras), Tapa (penance and austerity), Yoga (meditation and contemplation), and Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) as they are described by way of examples in the story. (9-10)

[Note—¹The four rewards are ‘Artha’—material well-being and prosperity; ‘Dharma’—righteous way of living; ‘Kaam’—fulfilment of desires; and ‘Moksha’—liberation and deliverance from the torments associated with the cycle of birth and death.

²These above rewards have two connotations—one is their temporal attainment, and the other is their spiritual attainment. A wise and intelligent person is one who reads the story of Ram Charit Manas and understands the fact that it is useless to strive for any kind of worldly gains by doing religious practices and meritorious deeds. The real use of reading and hearing the story of Lord Ram is to gain awareness and knowledge of what constitutes the actual benefit that one should hope to get by doing any meritorious deed in life. The superficial gains and rewards in the form of material riches, comfort, fame and powers are not of any real worth. The true reward one gets for all his efforts and other meritorious deeds must have a spiritual dimension to it, and it is to attain Mukti or Moksha—which is to attain freedom from the cycle of transmigration; attainment of emancipation and salvation of the soul; attaining oneness of the individual’s soul with the Supreme Soul.

Besides this, a careful reading of the story would also enlighten the devotee of what actually constitutes ‘meritorious deed’. The story also tells him what is Gyan, Vairagya, Japa, Tapa, Yoga etc. in the true sense, and what is the best reward of all these spiritual practices taken together.

Emphasise is on ‘first understanding these virtues wisely, and then speaking about them wisely as well’. This is an important observation. If one wrongly understands or interprets something that is vital and important, he would not only harm his own interests but others to whom he tells about it would also suffer.

So, a wise person is one who first carefully reads and analyses the story, understands its true meaning and deciphers its hidden message, and then only he

advises others about it. Otherwise, more harm would be done than doing any trace of good.

³The nine charms of poetical composition are the following shades of sentiments or emotions that are inherent in all compositions: (i) Sringaar—the sentiment of love and passion; (ii) Haasya—humour and satire; (iii) Karuna—pity; the pathetic sentiment; (iv) Vira—valour and heroism; (v) Rudra—anger, wrath, ill-temper and fury; (vi) Bhayaanak—that which inspires the sentiment of fear, terror and horror; (vii) Bibhatsa—the sentiment of disgust, revulsion; (viii) Shanta—tranquility, peace, calmness; (ix) and Adbhuta—that which is strange and marvellous, that which inspires wonder and awe.]

सुकृती साधु नाम गुण गाना । ते बिचित्र जल बिहग समाना ॥ ११ ॥
संतसभा चहुँ दिसि अवँराई । श्रद्धा रितु बसंत सम गाई ॥ १२ ॥

sukṛtī sādhu nāma guṇa gānā. tē bicitra jala bihaga samānā. 11.
santasabhā cahum̐̐disi avam̐̐rā'ī. śrad'dhā ritu basanta sama gā'ī. 12.

The wonderful flocks of aquatic birds of different kinds of feathers that abound in this lake are represented by the countless noble men who have done meritorious service and righteous deeds, as well as the innumerable saintly and pious souls who jointly praise Lord Ram and sing the Lord's excellent virtues and glories together¹. (11)

The congregation or assembly of saints (where such singing or recitation is done) represents the gardens and orchards (of succulent and sweet fruits) that surround this lake on all its four sides. [And it is in these assemblies or groups where these saints ecstatically sing the divine story of Lord Ram just like the proverbial lark. Fruit gardens are usually flocked by birds. Hence this metaphor is used here.]

The faith and devotion that these pious souls have for the sacred, divine and holy story of Lord Ram is like the spring season that prevails in this symbolic garden and orchard². (12)

[Note—¹Where there are large numbers of birds of different kinds, there would a cacophony of their sounds. This noise is not irritating for the senses; rather it sounds sweet and gives a pleasant aura to the environment. This analogy is used to describe how countless devotees sing or recite the story of Lord Ram in their own style, either singly or in unison with others, to create a pleasant atmosphere of holiness and spiritual bliss.

²The saints and holy men are exhilarated when they read and recite the story of Lord Ram. The atmosphere of joy and happiness that prevails in their company reminds one of the spring season when the leaves turn green, new flowers open their petals, the sun shines in all its splendour, there is greenery all around, and life seems to be full of happiness and joy.

This phenomenon of Nature is invoked here to emphasise that the general atmosphere in the company of saints is as pleasant, rejuvenating and spiritually refreshing as the spring season is for life on earth.]

भगति निरूपन बिबिध बिधाना । छमा दया दम लता बिताना ॥ १३ ॥
सम जम नियम फूल फल ग्याना । हरि पद रति रस बेद बखाना ॥ १४ ॥

bhagati nirūpana bibidha bidhānā. chamā dayā dama latā bitānā. 13.
sama jama niyama phūla phala gyānā. hari pada rati rasa bēda bakhānā. 14.

Exposition and discussions on the various shades of the virtue of Bhakti¹ (devotion for Lord Ram) as well as of Kshama (forgiveness), Daya (mercy and compassion) and Dama (self-restraint of one's sense organs)—these represent the canopy of creepers in these gardens and orchards (as visualised in the previous verse nos. 11-12 herein above). (13)

Control of the Mana (mind and heart), the five forms of Yam (self-restraint) and Niyam (observations, sacraments and vows)² are the symbolic flowers of these creepers that abound in the gardens and orchards (described above).

Gyan (true knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation; gnosis) is the fruit of these creepers. And having or developing devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Hari (Sri Ram) is the juice or the essence of these fruits³. (14)

[Note—¹The many forms that Bhakti can take have been described in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

²The five 'Yams' are the following: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-acquisition of worldly riches.

The five 'Niyams' or religious observances or vows are the following: purity, both external and internal, contentment, austerity, self-study of the scriptures, and repetition of holy Mantras that culminate in surrender to God).

³Of what use is Gyan if it can't teach the devotee to have devotion and faith in the Lord God. To wit, the true essence of hearing or studying Ram Charit Manas is that the devotee is able to develop devotion for Lord Ram, have faith in the Lord, and love the Lord as he would love his own life.]

औरउ कथा अनेक प्रसंगा । तेइ सुक पिक बहुबरन बिहंगा ॥ १५ ॥

aura'u kathā anēka prasaṅgā. tē'i suka pika bahubarana bihaṅgā. 15.

The myriad other tales and anecdotes narrated in this Ram Charit Manas are like the many parrots, cuckoo and other birds of colourful feathers that live in these gardens and orchards (as described herein above). (15)

दो०. पुलक बाटिका बाग बन सुख सुबिहंग बिहारु ।

माली सुमन सनेह जल सींचत लोचन चारु ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

pulaka bāṭikā bāga bana sukha subihaṅga bihāru.
mālī sumana sanēha jala sīncata lōcana cāru. 37.

Further, the sense of thrill, ecstasy and exhilaration that is obtained by hearing, reading and reciting this story of Lord Ram are the symbolic gardens, forests and orchards.

The joy and happiness and bliss that accompanies such hearing, reading and recitation are the symbolic birds that abound in these gardens, forests and orchards.

The purified and uncorrupt Mana (mind and heart) is like the expert gardener (who takes care of this metaphoric garden)¹. He waters the excellent garden and its beautiful plants with the water symbolised by the tears that flow from the eyes of the devotee when he is overwhelmed with ecstasy and bliss². (Doha no. 37)

[Note—¹To wit, just like the case of a garden or an orchard depending on the will and the sincere effort of an expert gardener to thrive and remain charming, the Mana of a devotee is responsible for how much benefit the devotee draws from the story of the Lord. If the Mana is interested and finds charm in the story of Lord Ram then it would motivate the devotee to find interest in the story and keep him focused on it. A wise and intelligent Mana would help the devotee to properly understand the story and derive benefit from it. Otherwise, the devotee would lose interest and easily get distracted by other things.

²Tears of joy and love would flow automatically when the devotee reaches a certain point of spiritual bliss that is expected by reading, hearing and reciting the holy story of Lord Ram. When this state is reached it is deemed that his spiritual garden has been well taken care of.]

चौ०. जे गावहिं यह चरित सँभारे । तेइ एहि ताल चतुर रखवारे ॥ १ ॥

सदा सुनहिं सादर नर नारी । तेइ सुरबर मानस अधिकारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jē gāvahiṁ yaha carita sam̐bhārē. tē'i ēhi tāla catura rakhavārē. 1.
sadā sunahiṁ sādara nara nārī. tē'i surabara mānasa adhikārī. 2.

Those who sing (or recite) this story with due care and diligence are the ones who are deemed to be clever, skilful and alert angel-guardians of this symbolic lake (representing the divine story of Lord Ram that contains the nectar that provides spiritual solace, succour, bliss and blessedness). (1)

Those men and women who hear this story reverentially, with due faith and devotion, are deemed to be the patron deities of this lake which is known as 'Manas'¹. (2)

[Note—¹The word "Manas" means that which is related to and originates in the 'Mana'—the mind and the heart. The holy story of Lord Ram was conceived in the

‘Mana’ of Lord Shiva, then whoever heard it later on loved it so much that he remembered it by heart and kept his mind engaged in thinking of it. The story of Lord Ram is so enchanting and spiritually fulfilling that once one hears it one becomes exhilarated and so enamoured of it that one would commit it to one’s memory and remember it fondly because it becomes very dear to the heart. The story takes a permanent place in the memory and the heart of the devotee, and whenever he has time to recall it, or whenever he hears it being recited by others, he feels ecstatic and blissful.

To wit, the spiritually rejuvenating story of Lord Ram is enshrined in the subtle space of the heart of the devotee just like a physical lake filled with fresh and cool water is located in a hollow space scooped out of the earth. Again, just as taking a dip in this physical water makes a man feel fresh and rejuvenated, a dip into the lake symbolised by the story of Lord Ram too provides rejuvenation and joy to the spirit and the mind of the devotee.

According to ancient tradition in the Indian society, all sacred places such as pilgrim centers and holy sites that include temples, lakes and ponds in these centers have a presiding deity to whom a person is expected to pay his obeisance before proceeding with his other religious rituals. In the case of the symbolic lake representing the story of Lord Ram, those devotees who sing it with devotion and faith, those who hold the story dear to their heart and mind, those who enjoy reading, reciting and preaching other about it to others, those who have understood its true meaning and spiritual value—they are the ones who are deemed to be living presiding deities of this ‘lake’. So they must be shown respect first before someone proceeds with the hearing or reciting of the story. This is done not only to honour them but also to invoke their blessing and patronage as they would help the new-comer to become fully acquainted with the intricacies of the story and its spiritual value, that would, in turn, motivate the newly initiated devotee to start loving and revering this story of the Lord.]

अति खल जे बिषई बग कागा । एहि सर निकट न जाहिं अभागा ॥ ३ ॥
संबुक भेक सेवार समाना । इहाँ न बिषय कथा रस नाना ॥ ४ ॥

ati khala jē biṣaī бага kāgā. ēhi sara nikaṭa na jāhiṁ abhāgā. 3.
sambuka bhēka sēvāra samānā. ihām̃ na biṣaya kathā rasa nānā. 4.

Those people who are wicked, crooked and pervert, those who love sensual pleasures and worldly charms more than anything else are the unfortunate ones who are like the herons and the crows who do not dare to venture near this lake¹. (3)

The reason is that in this divine and holy lake there are no snails, frogs and moss that symbolise vain talk and vile stories related to attachment to the senses². (4)

[Note—¹The ‘Mansarovar Lake’ located at the base of Mt. Kailash, the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva, is in the higher reaches of the Himalayan mountain range and is inhabited only by Swans; herons and crows don’t go there. This fact has been invoked here while comparing the story of Lord Ram with a sacred lake when it is said that herons and crows don’t go near this lake.

The 'Swan' is used as a metaphor for wisdom, purity and cleanliness. It is believed that it is so wise and selective in its choice of what to accept and what to reject that it would be able to separate water from milk, and pick up pearls from an assortment of jewels. On the other hand, crows and herons eat fish and are deemed to be lowly birds.

Therefore, in such a holy lake as the story of Lord Ram, only those who have a pure mind and heart can have access. Crooked people are not able to come near it.

²Those who find pleasure in the world and its sensual things will find the story of Lord Ram boring and dull as it does not cater to their liking. This story teaches one to renounce the pleasures of the gross mundane world as it does not give any lasting peace and happiness to the creature, but on the contrary it is so full of misery, pain and grief that it only causes torments to the creature. True and lasting happiness comes with self-realisation that entails turning away from the external world of sense objects, and towards the eternally blissful Atma that resides in the inner-self of all living beings. This eclectic spiritual philosophy, no matter how true and correct, would surely not appeal to the lustful and the passionate creature. So such people loathe this story of Lord Ram.]

तेहि कारन आवत हियँ हारे । कामी काक बलाक बिचारे ॥ ५ ॥

आवत एहिं सर अति कठिनाई । राम कृपा बिनु आइ न जाई ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi kārana āvata hiyaṁ hārē. Kāmī kāka balāka bicārē. 5.
āvata ēhiṁ sara ati kaṭhināī. Rāma kṛpā binu āī na jāī. 6.

This is the reason why people who are likened to herons and crows shun this lake and do not want even to venture near it. (5)

Access to this symbolic holy lake is very difficult, and the path leading to it is full of obstacles¹. Only those upon whom Lord Ram becomes graceful and kind are able to overcome all hurdles and access this sacred lake². (6)

[Note—¹These have been briefly enumerated in the verses that follow herein below.

Refer also to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, that describe the many spiritual hurdles that the devotee has to face, and which can only be overcome by the grace of Lord Ram: (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 71; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 89—to Doha no. 90; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 28-37 that precede Doha no. 121.

²Refer also to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas in this context: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 39; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 200; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 129.]

कठिन कुसंग कुपंथ कराला । तिन्ह के बचन बाघ हरि ब्याला ॥ ७ ॥

गृह कारज नाना जंजाला । ते अति दुर्गम सैल बिसाला ॥ ८ ॥

kaṭhina kusaṅga kupantha karālā. tinha kē bacana bāgha hari byālā. 7.
gr̥ha kāraja nānā janjālā. tē ati durgama saila bisālā. 8.

Company of highly pervert, sinful, evil, wicked and lustful persons is equivalent to the difficult terrain (path) that has to be successfully traversed in order to reach this lake¹.

The words of such companions are equivalent to the roar of the tiger and the lion, and the hissing sound of the snake². (7)

Similarly, the myriads of household duties and worldly obligations that have to be fulfilled are like the high and intractable mountains and hills that are very hard to cross before the seeker can reach this lake³. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the first hurdle is bad company. This company creates a lot of practical problems for the spiritual seeker. It is extremely difficult and requires a lot of will power and resilience on the part of the spiritual aspirant to resist the evil influence of this company.

²Just as the very roar of the tiger or the lion, or the hissing of the snake sends a chill down the spine of a person who is sore affright of them, the sarcastic remarks, derisive comments and insolent words of members of evil community for a person who wishes not to toe their evil line and instead lead a life of righteousness is too humiliating for him to bear with comfort. He feels disgusted and dejected and lonely; he feels rejected and condemned. Evil people would proffer so many ill-conceived and irrational logics to deter the righteous man and make him fall from his chosen spiritual path that even the wisest of men begins to doubt his own wisdom.

The result is that one finds it hard to travel cheerfully and spiritedly on the path that leads to the lake of spiritual nectar symbolised by the story of Ram Charit Manas. His steps become heavy and weary, and chances are that he would yield to the constant mental and emotional pressure exerted by his companions to stop thinking of this lake.

³This is the second practical problem a spiritual aspirant faces. Even if he decides to shun bad company, he finds it difficult not to fulfill his obligations towards his family and the world. He has to carry on with his business or vocation that consume the better part of his time and energy in life, leaving little space for him to devote towards his spiritual objectives.]

बन बहु बिषम मोह मद माना । नदीं कुतर्क भयंकर नाना ॥ ९ ॥

bana bahu biṣama mōha mada mānā. nadīm kutarka bhayaṅkara nānā. 9.

The negative traits such as ‘Moha’ (infatuation and attachment), ‘Mada’ (arrogance and haughtiness) and ‘Maan’ (ego and pride) are like the many dense forests that have to be crossed in order to access the lake.

Irrational logic, fallacious arguments, pretensions of self-righteousness and having better knowledge, fraud and deceptions are the many terrifying rivers that too have to be crossed in order to reach this lake. (9)

[Note—These are the third set of problems faced by the seeker. Even if he manages to overcome the physical obstacles listed in the previous verses, the ones listed here become harder to overcome as they relate to his inner-self and form a part of his attitude, character and inherent nature to which he is habituated, and which is too difficult to mend.]

दो०. जे श्रद्धा संबल रहित नहिं संतन्ह कर साथ ।

तिन्ह कहूँ मानस अगम अति जिन्हहि न प्रिय रघुनाथ ॥ ३८ ॥

dōhā.

jē śrad'dhā sambala rahita nahim santanha kara sātha.

tinha kahum' mānasa agama ati jinhahi na priya raghunātha. 38.

Those who do not have money in the form of faith, conviction and devotion to meet their travel expenses, those who do not have a company of saints and pious people on this path, and those who do not have affection for Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram)—such people find this path extremely arduous and difficult to travel. (Doha no. 38)

[Note—These three things—money for travel expenses, company of like-minded fellow travellers, and a strong desire and dedication to reach the targeted place—are necessary for a traveller to reach his cherished destination. Hence, the factors mentioned in this Doha help a spiritual aspirant to fully benefit from the reading and hearing of the story of Lord Ram.

To wit, he must have faith and belief, he must have company of saintly people who would encourage him onwards if he gets stuck somewhere or if he is unable to understand anything, and love for Lord Ram that would keep him inspired.]

चौ०. जौं करि कष्ट जाइ पुनि कोई । जातहिं नीद जुड़ाई होई ॥ १ ॥

जड़ता जाड़ बिषम उर लागा । गएहुँ न मज्जन पाव अभागा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaum kari kab jā'i puni kō'i. jātahim nīda juṛā'ī hō'ī. 1.

jaṛatā jāra biṣama ura lāgā. ga'ēhum' na majjana pāva abhāgā. 2.

Hence, the journey to access this lake represented by the story of Lord Ram is very arduous and full of difficulties. In spite of this, if a person successfully overcomes all these problems and manages to reach the lake, he is overcome with sleep and lethargy as if he has some fever¹. (1)

His heart becomes so numbed by foolishness and ignorance that it literally begins to develop signs of shivering that usually accompanies high fever².

As a result of this perceived illness (shivering and drowsiness as if fever is coming on), this unfortunate person is deprived of the opportunity to take a bath in this sacred lake inspite of the fact that he has already reached it after striding so many difficulties found on the way³. (2)

[Note—¹By the time the pilgrim reaches the holy lake he is so tired that he becomes sleepy. This means that even if one manages to actually hear this glorious story from some wise saint or read it under the guidance of such saint, he soon becomes bored, begins to yawn and becomes drowsy. It is a natural observation that when one does not find anything of great interest he begins to get bored, and this is manifested in the form of yawning and drowsiness.

²The traveller had endured so much difficulty to reach his destination. It is so stupid for him to waste his time by going to sleep there instead of doing what he is expected to do upon completion of the journey.

Similarly, the spiritual aspirant would be deemed to be a great fool if he becomes bored of reading and hearing the divine story of Lord Ram which he has managed to access due to some great good luck of his. It is not an ordinary story which one would read casually to pass time while commuting on a train or bus, or one that is read before going to bed at night so that it can induce sleep.

It is a holy and sacred story that has profound implications for the spiritual welfare of a person as it bestows upon him spiritual fulfilment and liberation to his soul, and so must not be treated lightly.

³The meaning is clear: A devotee needs a fresh and alert mind to fully benefit from the story of Ram Charit Manas. If he becomes inclined to doze off, it is futile for him to hear or read it.]

करि न जाइ सर मज्जन पाना । फिरि आवइ समेत अभिमाना ॥ ३ ॥
जौं बहोरि कोउ पूछन आवा । सर निंदा करि ताहि बुझावा ॥ ४ ॥

kari na jā'i sara majjana pānā. phiri āva'i samēta abhimānā. 3.
jaum bahōri kō'u pūchana āvā. sara nindā kari tāhi bujhāvā. 4.

Due to the above problems he is unable to bathe in this lake, so he returns and becomes proud of his spiritual achievement¹. (3)

Then if someone comes to him to seek advice and his opinion about this lake (symbolised by the story of Lord Ram), this unfortunate person criticises the lake and discourages the would-be traveller (spiritual aspirant) not to take the trouble of making this journey (or hearing and reading this story)². (4)

[Note—¹He proudly tells everyone that he has fully read this holy book, he has heard discourses on it, and he is fully conversant with it. But this is mere falsehood and obvious boast as he was sleeping all through.

It is just like the case of someone going on a long journey of pilgrimage to a holy place that entails a lot of money, planning, effort and dedication. But instead of devoting his mind on some spiritual theme at least for the time spent on this journey

and while he was at the holy place, if a person spends this time on futile worldly talk or on merrily eating and drinking away, and then when he actually reaches the place he wraps himself in a blanket and goes off to sleep while his companions are performing their religious duties—what would be said of such a person if he comes back from this journey that was more of a picnic or a leisure trip for him than a true pilgrimage, and boasts about his spiritual fulfilment due to this religious journey? He would indeed be deceiving himself as well as his friends?

²This unfortunate and ill-fated person who found the story uninteresting would discourage other people and tell them that there is no good in reading or hearing it.

To wit, a true seeker should be wary of such persons.]

सकल बिघ्न व्यापहिं नहिं तेही । राम सुकृपाँ बिलोकहिं जेही ॥ ५ ॥
सोइ सादर सर मज्जनु करई । महा घोर त्रयताप न जरई ॥ ६ ॥

sakala bighna byāpahim̐ nahim̐ tēhī. rāma sukrpām̐ bilōkahim̐ jēhī. 5.
sō'i sādara sara majjanu kara'ī. mahā ghōra trayatāpa na jara'ī. 6.

All the different obstacles hinted at in the aforesaid verses do not cause any hindrance for a devotee who is looked upon munificently by Lord Ram¹. (5)

Only a soul who is fortunate enough to be graced by Lord Ram is able to (first successfully access this symbolic lake of spiritual nectar, and then) take a bath reverentially in this lake, and as a reward of this he is also not affected by the three legendary fires (or torments) that create immense misery for all living beings². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 28; (b) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 21; (c) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30; (d) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 48; (e) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129.

All the above cited verses emphasise that when Lord Ram looks gracefully upon someone, all his miseries and troubles are dispelled.

²The three horrifying fires representing the different torments that create immense suffering and misery for all living beings are the following: 'Adhyatmic'—those related to his spiritual well-being; 'Adhbhaucic'—those related to the world and its inhabitants; and 'Adhidaivic'—those related to opposed gods and stars.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21 where it is said that these three fires have no effect in the reign of Lord Ram. To wit, wherever there is the shadow of Lord Ram's grace and mercy, these three types of torments are vanquished automatically.

Even as a man who is scorched by the blazing sun finds intense pleasure and relief by taking a dip in a fresh water lake, a devotee who immerses himself in the story of Lord Ram, reading it, reciting it and preaching it to others, too derives immense bliss, solace and succour for his tormented soul that had been suffering from countless problems associated with life in this gross mundane world of transmigration. He is able to enjoy the freshness of the rejuvenated spirit, he is able to

find bliss and happiness that had eluded him all his life prior to his accessing this symbolic lake representing the divine story of Lord Ram.

So therefore, though a devotee had heard and read the story in the beginning out of curiosity, he later on begins to love it and hold it dear to his heart and mind when he experiences spiritual ecstasy and a sense of blessedness got by this effort so much so that he begins to revere the sacred story of Lord Ram and adore it like one would worship a deity which fulfils all his wishes.]

ते नर यह सर तजहिं न काऊ । जिन्ह कें राम चरन भल भाऊ ॥ ७ ॥
जो नहाइ चह एहिं सर भाई । सो सतसंग करउ मन लाई ॥ ८ ॥

tē nara yaha sara tajahim na kā'ū. jinha kēm rāma carana bhala bhā'ū. 7.
jō nahā'i caha ēhim sara bhā'ī. sō satasaṅga kara'u mana lā'ī. 8.

Those men who have abiding faith, devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram, they do not leave this symbolic lake, no matter what the temptation or provocation is. (7)

Oh Brother! Those who wish to take a refreshing bath in this lake should endeavour to have company of pious and saintly souls¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 128; (ii) Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 130.]

अस मानस मानस चख चाही । भइ कबि बुद्धि बिमल अवगाही ॥ ९ ॥
भयउ हृदयँ आनंद उछाहू । उमगेउ प्रेम प्रमोद प्रबाहू ॥ १० ॥

asa mānasa mānasa cakha cāhī. bha'i kabi bud'dhi bimala avagāhī. 9.
bhaya'u hr̥dayam ānanda uchāhū. umagē'u prēma pramōda prabāhū. 10.

When a wise, sagacious, self-realised and enlightened poet (kabi) saw this symbolic lake with his subtle eyes of wisdom and intellect, and when he took a dip in this lake (filled with nectar of bliss and beatitude), his mind was purified (of whatever remnants of evils and faults that had managed to cling to it till this point of time). (9)

His heart felt extremely exhilarated and thrilled, and a wave of delight, joy, bliss and beatitude surged in it¹. (10)

[Note—¹A very beautiful example of how one feels refreshed and rejuvenated when he beholds the enchanting beauty of Nature and takes a bath in a fresh water lake with clean and cool water after a long journey on foot is found when Lord Ram, along with his younger brother Laxman, went to Pampa Lake and took a bath in it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39—to

Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 41. These verses marvellously describe the charm of that wonderful scene.]

चली सुभग कबिता सरिता सो । राम बिमल जस जल भरिता सो ॥ ११ ॥

सरजू नाम सुमंगल मूला । लोक बेद मत मंजुल कूला ॥ १२ ॥

calī subhaga kabitā saritā sō. rāma bimala jasa jala bharitā sō. 11.
sarajū nāma sumaṅgala mūlā. lōka bēda mata maṅjula kūlā. 12.

When the thrilled and jubilant poet's heart overflowed with surging waves of emotional ecstasy and joy, he could not restrain himself so much so that his emotions spilled over and poured out from his exhilarated heart in the form of excellent poetry that symbolised a river of pristine pure water symbolising the divine story of Lord Ram¹. (11)

This metaphoric river is called "River Saryu"² (that flows on the north-bank of the holy city of Ayodhya which was the capital city of Lord Ram when he took a human birth in the kingdom with the same name).

This river is holy and purifying, and it is a fountain of bliss and joy.

This symbolic river has two banks representing the secular view-point and the one from the perspective of the scriptures³. (12)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Tulsidas talks about all the spiritually realised poets and bards who have sung the glorious story of Lord Ram known as Ram Charit Manas with the greatest of devotion and affection. Like a perennially flowing river that has its source in the higher reaches of the mighty mountains where glaciers are located, a river that descends from the high mountains and irrigates the dry plains below to provide joy and succour to one and all, and finally it ends in the ocean which awaits to embrace it along with all the creatures such as aquatic animals and plants that are present in its water, the story of Lord Ram makes its appearance in the Mana (mind and heart) of great sages and saints, then it reaches the common man who hears it from these exalted souls, deriving immense happiness and joy by doing so. Some of these fortunate ones dive deep in the water of this symbolic river, and when they find its waters to be nectar-like they prefer to remain in it forever instead of going on land that is dry and parched for water. So they swim along with the currents of this majestic river to find their final destiny in the form of liberation and deliverance of the soul when it merges with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram.

Indeed, what a fascinating thing and wonderful scenario for a poet to imagine!

²The story of River Saryu: There are many versions of how river Saryu, which flows on the north of the holy city of Ayodhya where Lord Ram took birth and ruled as its great King, appeared on earth.

(a) According to Ananda Ramayan, Yatra Kand, Canto 4, the story briefly is as follows:- Once Lord Ram went to meet the great sage named Mudgal in his old hermitage, but on reaching there the Lord found that the sage had left it and now lives in somewhere else in another hermitage. The Lord went there and asked the sage why he had abandoned the previous hermitage.

The sage explained that he wanted to live at a place where the two holy rivers Ganges and Saryu exist together so that he can derive religious merit of bathing in both of them at the same time. Lord Ram wished to know about the importance of river Saryu and how it came down to earth.

The learned sage told the Lord that in some ancient time a demon named Shankhaasur had stolen the Vedas and hid them in the bottom of the ocean. Then Lord Vishnu, who is the primary form of Lord Ram, took the form of a great Fish and salvaged the Vedas after slaying the demon. Then Lord Vishnu reverted to his original form and felt so glad that tears of joy flowed from his eyes. These tears of joy fell down to form a river that flowed and collected in a lake known as Mansarovar somewhere in the bowls of the lofty mountains called Himalayas.

Just during that period of time, the great ancient King known as Vaivaswat Manu (after whom one cycle of creation known as a 'Manwantar' is named) decided to do a fire sacrifice. He sought the advice of his Guru (preceptor) who told him that if he intends to do the fire sacrifice then he must sanctify and purify the land by bringing the holy river Saryu from the Himalayas.

Hearing this, the King shot an arrow that pierced the wall of the mighty mountains that surrounded the Mansarovar Lake so that the waters of river Saryu gushed through the crevice and streamed down to the plains. This stream followed behind the arrow as it returned to the quiver of the King. It may have been that the stream of the river flowed through the groove made on the surface of the earth by the blazing arrow as it made its way through the plains and up the side of the mountain to reach the lake like some colossal caterpillar.

This river is called 'Saryu' as this name reminds one of its origin in a 'lake' which is called a 'Sara' in the local dialect, or because it was discovered by an arrow which is called 'Shara'.

(b) According to Satyopaakhyaan, Canto 37, verse nos. 15-41, the story of river Saryu is as follows:- Once, King Dasrath of Ayodhya paid his obeisance to the holy river Saryu by composing a eight-verse hymn in her honour. The deity representing this river was pleased, and she revealed herself. Then the great king told her that as far as he knew, his Guru, sage Vasistha, had brought the river during the era of King Swayambhu Manu. But that is all he knew about the origin of the river. So he wanted to know more about it.

The patron deity of Saryu answered the king and told him the story behind the advent of this holy river on earth. It is this: In the beginning of creation when Brahma, the Creator, himself was born on the top of a lotus flower that emerged from the navel of the Supreme Being known as Viraat Purush, he was inspired to do Tapa (penance and austerity) to empower him to initiate the process of creation. Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush, was so pleased by Brahma's Tapa that tears of joy flowed down his eyes. When Brahma saw these tears of blessing, he immediately collected them in his Kamandalu (the wooden water-pot he carried). Brahma realized that this water (tears of Vishnu) is very rare, and since it was shed personally by the Lord it is to be revered and worshipped as a direct blessing of the Lord. So Brahma created a lake by employing the creative powers of his mind for safekeeping of this holy and sanctified water. Since this lake was the result of Brahma's mind, and also perhaps because this 'lake' symbolized the emotion of love and devotion for Lord Vishnu that he had in his heart, the lake was called 'Mansarovar'—the lake ("sarovar") having its origin in the 'Mana' (mind and heart).

Brahma then poured the contents of the water-pot into it, and appointed a sage named Manjukesh to guard it.

Later on, the great King Ikshwaku, one of the forefathers of Lord Ram, requested his Guru sage Vasistha to bring this holy water for him. Vasistha prayed to Manjukesh and sought his permission to take the river to the plains where Ayodhya was located. The sage granted his permission and told Vasistha that first he must bathe in the lake, and then a stream of water would follow the direction he takes. Sage Vasistha took a holy dip in its water, and moved in the direction of Ayodhya which lay to the south. So a stream of water from the Mansarovar Lake followed him as he walked back to the kingdom of Ayodhya. This is how the river reached this holy city.

³This statement means that the story of Lord Ram, known as the epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, is approached by people in two different ways, depending on their spiritual attitude, outlook and objective. One approach is the secular one whereby the reader treats it as a historical or mythological narration of some ancient event. This approach makes them regard Lord Ram as being a great and noble King of a certain ancient kingdom known by the name of Ayodhya, and then with this view-point they read the rest of the story.

The other perspective is in light of what the scriptures say of Lord Ram—that he was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, who is also known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the almighty cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. Lord Ram came down to earth in a human form to fulfil certain obligations that he had as the ‘Lord of Creation’. Hence, he was a visible and easily accessible form of the Supreme Being who is primarily invisible as well as beyond the reach of the senses and the mind-intellect complex.

For a spiritual aspirant, the second approach is what bears fruits.]

नदी पुनीत सुमानस नंदिनि । कलिमल तृन तरु मूल निकंदिनि ॥ १३ ॥

nadī punīta sumānasa nandini. kalimala tr̥ṇa taru mūla nikandini. 13.

This holy and purifying river is the ‘daughter of an auspicious lake’¹ (known as the Mansarovar Lake). It is powerful and strong enough to uproot the sins, small or big, that are so common in the era of Kaliyug like any great river that would snatch and carry with its swift currents the twigs and small plants found obstructing its path². (13)

[Note—¹The river Saryu is called a ‘daughter of the lake’ because it has its origin in it. We have other instances where one is assigned a name that reflects one’s origin. For instance, goddess Parati, the consort of Lord Shiva, is often called ‘Girija’ as she was born in the Himalaya Mountains. Sita, the consort of Lord Ram, is called ‘Jaanki’ as she was the daughter of King Janak.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 35.]

दो०. श्रोता त्रिबिध समाज पुर ग्राम नगर दुहुँ कूल ।
संतसभा अनुपम अवध सकल सुमंगल मूल ॥ ३९ ॥

dōhā.

śrōtā tribidha samāja pura grāma nagara duhum' kūla.
santasabhā anupama avadha sakala sumāṅgala mūla. 39.

The three types of listeners¹ of this story are the various villages, hamlets and towns that are found on the two banks of this holy river.

The exalted community of saints and pious people where this story is read and recited with great devotion and due reverence, where its verses constantly reverberate in all the directions, is the symbolic holy city of Ayodhya (on the north of which this holy river Saryu flows). (Doha no. 39)

[Note—¹The three types of listeners are the following: (i) those who have already attained self-realisation; (ii) those who are striving to attain self-realisation; and (iii) those who are not interested in spiritual pursuits as they are tempted by the senses.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 53; (b) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 15.]

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(d) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114:-

गिरिजा सुनुहु राम कै लीला । सुर हित दनुज बिमोहनसीला ॥ ८ ॥

girijā sunahu rāma kai līlā. sura hita danuja bimōhanasīlā. 8.

[Lord Shiva told his consort—] ‘Listen Girija (girijā sunahu)! This mystical story of Lord Ram is beneficial for the Gods who represent holy souls (as it grants blessedness and welfare to them), and on the other hand it deludes and confounds the Demons who represent evil souls (as it completely bewilders them, mystifies their soul, and instills fear in their mind and heart). (8)

दो०. रामकथा सुरधेनु सम सेवत सब सुख दानि ।

सतसमाज सुरलोक सब को न सुनै अस जानि ॥ ११३ ॥

dōhā.

rāmakathā suradhēnu sama sēvata saba sukha dāni.
satasamāja suralōka saba kō na sunai asa jāni. 113.

The magnificent, glorious, divine, holy and sacred story of Lord Ram (rāmakathā) is like the all wish-filling cow of the gods known as Kaamdheni, because it fulfils all the wishes of the devotees who serve it with faith and devotion.

In the same vein, the assembly of saints and pious people is equivalent to the abode of gods on earth. [It is in this assembly that the story of Ram Charit Manas is sung and explained; it is the community of saints where one would hear discussions on spiritual matters and discourses on Lord God.]²

Keeping this in mind, who would not love to serve it (i.e. enjoy the company of saints where the divine story of Lord Ram is narrated, spiritual discourses are held, and all doubts are removed)? (Doha no. 113)

[Note—¹The benefits of hearing the sacred story of Lord Ram have been enumerated at many places in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 53; (iii) Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede it; (iv) Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it; (v) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 130.

²Whereas it is extremely difficult to access and enjoy the environment of bliss and joy that prevails in the heaven where the gods live, its symbolic form can actually be experienced right here on earth when one keeps the company of saints where the story of Lord Ram is recited, expounded, read and studied.

The glory of company of saints has been lauded in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45 (where Lord Ram has praised company of saints, saying that such company is sure to eliminate all form of sorrows associated with this mortal world and its miseries); (ii) Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 121 where Kaagbhusund says that meeting there is no greater joy than meeting true saints.]

चौ०. रामकथा सुंदर कर तारी । संसय बिहग उड़ावनिहारी ॥ १ ॥

रामकथा कलि बिटप कुठारी । सादर सुनु गिरिराजकुमारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāmakathā sundara kara tāri. sansaya bihaga urāvanihārī. 1.

rāmakathā kali biṭapa kuṭhārī. sādara sunu girirājakumārī. 2.

The ‘Ram Katha’ (meaning the sacred story that narrates the life, time and deeds of the Supreme Lord during his manifestation on earth as Lord Ram, the prince of Ayodhya) is like clapping together of the palms of the hands as it drives away all sorts of birds symbolising various spiritual delusions, miseries and doubts that cause immense bewilderments, consternation and perplexities in the heart and mind of a person (who is keen to find some source that would give him internal peace and happiness)¹.

[To wit, the magnificent, glorious, divine, holy and sacred story of Lord Ram (rāmakathā) is like the clapping of one’s hands which chases away birds symbolising doubts and confusions.] (1)

‘Ram Katha’ is like an axe that can chop off the huge and abominable tree representing all the miseries and torments associated with life in Kaliyug, the dark age of lack of spiritual peace and happiness, as well as uncertainty regarding one’s destiny².

[To wit, his wonderful and mystical story of Lord Ram acts as an axe by which one can chop-off the huge tree represented by Kaliyug.]

This being the case, oh daughter of the king of mountains (“*gīrīrājakumārī*”; i.e. Parvati), listen to the narration of this divine, holy and sacred story of Lord Ram with full attention, respect, reverence, faith and belief³. (2)

[Note—¹In this analogy, recitation or narration of the ‘Ram Katha’ is like the clapping of the palms of the hands, and just like a farmer chases away myriad birds destroying his crop in the field by clapping loudly, the divine story of Lord Ram too eliminates all sorts of spiritual confusions and uneasiness that torment a person, thereby granting his soul abiding peace, comfort, solace and succour, as well as providing a hope for deliverance from the seemingly endless chain of miseries associated with the cycle of transmigration, assuring him of salvation and emancipation of his soul.

In the context of Lord Ram’s sacred story eliminating all delusions and spiritual uneasiness, refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 68 where we read that Garud has told sage Kaagbhusund that after hearing this story all his delusions and confusions have vanished.

A similar idea is expressed by Parvati at the end of the narration by her husband Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

The mystical powers and glories of Lord Ram’s sacred story known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’ have been extolled at numerous places in this holy book. For instance, refer to (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32 (Tulsidas); (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 52 (Lord Shiva to Parvati); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 53 (Parvati to Lord Shiva); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 64 (Garud to Kaagbhusund); (v) Doha no. 68 (Garud to Kaagbhusund); (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 123 (Kaagbhusund to Garud); (vii) Doha no. 126 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it (Lord Shiva to Parvati); and (viii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 129 (conversation between Lord Shiva and Parvati).

²The holy story of Lord Ram grants internal peace to its narrator, to its listener, as well as to the reader. Like a wood-cutter who is able to fell down even a huge tree if he has a good and sharpened axe in his hand, a devotee of Lord Ram and a wise person can also get rid of all sorts of internal uneasiness pertaining to his soul and the worry about his spiritual destiny if he listens to, reads and narrates this divine story that would act as a magic charm and a panacea for all his spiritual problems. It would stabilize his inner-self and give him internal peace and succour by removing all causes of his consternations and fears pertaining to this mortal gross world, and his fear of sinking in the choppy waters of this symbolic ocean represented by life in the dark age of Kaliyug just like a ship caught in a fierce storm fears of capsizing and sinking till the time it finds a lighthouse that directs it to a harbour where it can lay its anchor and lie at rest.

³It is important to listen to the story of Lord Ram keeping in mind Lord Shiva’s advice. One must listen to it with due reverence, belief and faith; one must pay attention to it, and not feel bored by its narration. One must have faith in Lord Ram and be convinced of the Lord’s divinity and holiness, because then the listener would listen to the Lord’s story as something that is divine and holy and sacred, something

that can help him out of his or her spiritual problems, something that can grant internal peace, happiness, stability, solace and succour. Otherwise it becomes an ordinary story, an imaginary tale that is full of fancies and contradictions, which skeptical people would tear apart at the drop of a hat with all sorts of arguments and logics in their zeal to punch holes in it and prove it incredulous and ridiculous.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 12; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 38; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46; (vi) Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 35 (Tulsidas); (vii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47 (Yagyawalkya); (viii) Doha no. 124-b (Yagyawalkya to Bharadwaj); (b) Uttar Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 95 (Kaagbhusund to Garud).]

राम नाम गुन चरित सुहाए । जनम करम अगनित श्रुति गाए ॥ ३ ॥

जथा अनंत राम भगवाना । तथा कथा कीरति गुन नाना ॥ ४ ॥

rāma nāma guna carita suhā'ē. janama karama aganita śruti gā'ē. 3.
jathā ananta rāma bhagavānā. tathā kathā kīrati guna nānā. 4.

The Vedas (śruti) have declared that Lord Ram is infinite and beyond measure and comprehension, and so are the Lord's many names, his countless virtues and glories, the countless mystical deeds done by the Lord in his different incarnations in different eras, so much so that they cannot be enumerated and listed exhaustively¹. (3)

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, just as Lord Ram is infinite and beyond measure and comprehension, so are the stories dedicated to him, and so are his glories and virtues (i.e. Lord Ram's virtues and glories are infinite and beyond comprehension)². (4)

[Note—¹This verse essentially says that Lord Ram, being the Supreme Being himself, as well as the cosmic Consciousness itself personified, is the One who has revealed himself in the form of this vast and infinite universe with its mind-boggling diversities and intellect-defying variations. Hence, it is impossible that the Lord be defined and comprehended. Each unit of this creation is a revelation of Brahm, the all-pervading and all-encompassing cosmic form of Lord Ram as pure Consciousness, and so therefore, it is impossible to count his names, virtues, glories and deeds which are as infinite and incomprehensible as the creation itself—because it is not possible to prepare a list all the units of creation as they are countless, and hence it is also not possible to comprehensively enumerate the virtues and glories of Lord Ram.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 23.

Meanwhile, the glories of Lord Ram's holy name have been extolled in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 22; (ii) Doha no. 23—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28.

²A similar idea is expressed by Lord Shiva once again in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 17-24 that precede Doha no. 13 (prayer of the Vedas); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 52 (Lord Shiva's declaration); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 91 (sage Kaagbhusund's view).

All these verses say that both Lord Ram and his stories are infinite and beyond comprehension. Learned saints and illustrious sages describe them in accordance with their understanding, but they only say what they have understood, but there is much more that yet remains to be understood and narrated.]

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APPENDIX—2

About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) www.amazon.com (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) www.pothi.com (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version) through the following platforms: (i) Apple (ibooks), (ii) Barnes & Noble (nook), (iii) Kobo, (iv) Page Foundry, (v) Scribd, (vi) Tolino etc.:-

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi

Ramayan” based on Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitalawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) ‘Dohawali’; (2) ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) ‘Kavitalawali’; (4) ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(A-3) A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, otherwise also known as the “Ramayana” according to Goswami Tulsidas. My English version of this Book is comprehensive and an elaborate one, as it runs into many thousands of pages that endeavour to explain each single verse of the Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ in fine detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

(B) The following Books have been published in ‘Printed-Book Deluxe Editions’ by a reputed Indian Publisher (details given below) :

1. Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.]

2. English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.
3. English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
4. English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
5. A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (C):

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